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MARCUS GARVEY AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF BLACK PRIDE

By

SOPHIA TERESA SKYERS  
B.A. University of Keele 1981

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the Master of Arts degree  
Wilfrid Laurier University  
1982

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## ABSTRACT

The anomalous position of black people in the United States, following the first World War, set the stage for the arrival of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association. Originally formed in Jamaica in 1914, Garvey transported the UNIA to the United States as the war was drawing to a close, and quickly rose to popularity as black people responded positively to Garvey and his movement.

Centered around the philosophy of black pride, Garvey's movement set out to give black people a sense of worthiness in their race and colour. He gave expression to the frustrations of black people who had suffered the effect of agricultural depression in the South, and poverty and unemployment in the North. It was Garvey's firm belief that a movement erected on a solid foundation of black pride, would wield black people everywhere into a united front thus giving them the power to liberate their race.

Garvey who emerged as a leader in the early 20th century, followed closely in the footsteps of his 19th century forerunners who included, Delaney, Turner and Washington among others. They had articulated various expressions of a black nationalist doctrine and Garvey stressed some elements of their philosophies, modified others, and contributed ideas of his own.

Though the UNIA was to lose its mass appeal after Garvey's expulsion from the United States, his conviction in his ideas and program remained as strong as ever.

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## INTRODUCTION

The central concern of this thesis will be the concept of blackness, and the way Marcus Garvey employed it in the founding and development of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), and as a powerful means of appeal to black people on every continent. Throughout his career as an advocate of separatism and a host of other black nationalist ideas, Garvey talked at length about the negative images invoked by blackness and the necessity for black people to invert their colour concepts and in this way, teach themselves to see blackness as the legitimate standard for their race.

It is possible to examine Garvey's ideas from a variety of perspectives, and an analysis of his purely religious or economic activities would be quite justifiable were it not for the fact that these activities, and the extent to which they expressed his philosophy have been dealt with at length elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> By focusing specifically on black pride as the axis of his ideological framework, the intention is to provide a fresh approach to the study of Garveyism. Here was a man who founded a movement designed to create a universal black identity, and in this sense, Garvey's religious, economic and political endeavours were not separate entities, but manifestations of the version of black pride he articulated. Blackness was the idea which wove together his philosophical, economic, religious and political thinking in furtherance of his program for black liberation, and it will be analysed as such. It is within this context that Garvey enunciated

his thoughts on blackness and black pride as the basis for race-building and the founding of a separate African nation. Garvey never believed in black superiority as opposed to white, but urged separation because the then prevailing and historical experiences of black people provided him with all the evidence needed to demonstrate that blacks could never live as free and equal citizens among whites.

Garvey's conception of black pride then, played a major part in his political analysis of the condition of black people, and was woven into his search for the key to black liberation. From an analysis of Garvey's speeches and writings, it will become clear that the black pride element in his thought, formed the basis of his total philosophy, and was the root from which all his ideas on pan-Africanism, emigration to Africa, the creation of a black corporate economy, and emphasis upon the legitimacy of an all-black religion sprang. Garvey's anti-communist views, and his stand against W.E.B. Du Bois must also be considered in the light of this focus, and while it is possible to see these two major questions merely as a difference between his and his opponents' strategy, it is the contention here that Garvey's rigid adherence to the idea of black pride shaped the nature of his debate with Du Bois and explains his negative response to communism. It also explains why Garvey was willing to sanction any movement which he saw as having separate but complementary objectives to his own, like the Ku Klux Klan, which stressed white purity and ignored the demands of black people as irrelevant in a white man's country.

Some historians have misunderstood Garvey and misinterpreted the aims and objectives of his movement, or have missed the point



of Garvey and Garveyism altogether. E. David Cronon, probably the earliest writer on Garvey, devotes much attention and detailed analysis to the actual workings and organization of the UNIA in his book Black Moses (1955), but assigns Garvey's message of black pride a place of secondary importance. Cronon is more concerned with the complete history of the UNIA than with pursuing a discussion of any particular issue. He attempts to tell the story of the UNIA, beginning with the growth of Garvey's ideas in his formative years, and then moves on to look at the conditions in the United States which made the climate right for the arrival of Garvey, and contributed to the growth of the UNIA. While Cronon does stress that Garvey was important as a symbol of black pride this is more of an aside to his real concern which is with addressing the question of Garvey's success or failure as a race leader within the confines of the United States.

In his analysis of the Black Star Line, Cronon does point out that it taught a valuable lesson in black pride, but investigating stocks, shares and book-keeping to uncover how inefficient the UNIA was, and to what extent it was built upon weak foundations is of primary importance to Cronon. Also, as in studies of more recent years, the references to black pride which form part of Cronon's book are not woven into Garvey's complete philosophy. Finally, by concentrating exclusively on the American context, Cronon cannot appreciate the impact of Garvey on an international scale and is almost forced to write Garvey and the UNIA off as a failure.<sup>2</sup>

Two more recent writers on Garvey, Theodore G. Vincent, and Tony Martin, although dealing with Garvey in a more sympathetic manner

approach their subject from a different standpoint than the one this thesis will take. It is never their intention to examine black pride specifically. Theodore Vincent's study, Black Power and the Garvey Movement, (1971), looks at Garveyism as a constructive and workable philosophy and sees the separatist aspect of Garveyism as consistent with a struggle for civil rights and liberties. Vincent also argues that the ethos behind the UNIA was practical in the sense that in asking for control of their own lives and institutions, Garveyites were in essence asking for a pluralistic society and the right to conduct their lives unfettered by other groups. Vincent refers briefly to Garvey's message as offering black people a 'new humanism' but apart from two vague references, he does not define it further. In any event, Vincent's concern is more with the UNIA as an international movement and with the impact of Garvey's ideas on other continents and not exclusively the United States. He points out that the goals of the UNIA differed in respect to their locations and that in Africa and the Caribbean, the UNIA's task was to wage an immediate fight for independence, while in the United States and Canada, the UNIA's first concern was with bringing about the unity of black people.

After examining the role of imperialist forces in the UNIA's decline, Vincent goes on to look at the way in which aspects of Garvey's philosophy have been embraced by other black liberation movements such as the Black Muslims, and The Father Divine Peace Mission. In addition he looks at the way communists in the 1930's tried to win the support of Garveyites in the United States by incorporating black power elements into their program.<sup>3</sup>

Tony Martin, in his study, Race First (1976), devotes his attention to a variety of issues. He deals with Garvey's black pride philosophy, especially within the context of the UNIA's black religion and Garvey's thoughts on history. Of Garvey's religion, Martin says that it formed part of his program for instilling pride in his followers, and he sees Garvey's stress on history as fulfilling a part of the same function. However, though Martin does point out the importance of black pride as an element in Garvey's philosophy, it is underdeveloped and is not central to his work. Surprisingly, in Martin's section on the Negro World entitled 'Propaganda,' the question he addresses is not the role the paper was designed to fulfil amongst black people, but the opposition to it in colonial and African countries. The message of black pride in the Negro World is missing.<sup>4</sup>

The most important weakness in Martin's study is that he tries to cover far too much material. He uses a framework which is far too large, attempting to cover virtually every issue linked with Garveyism. The feeling is that Martin is trying to write the ultimate work on Garvey but the result is that the book lacks real substance. To cover adequately every issue within the scope of one volume is an impossible undertaking.

Wilson Jeremiah Moses views Garvey as an idealistic rather than systematic thinker completely in tune with the needs and aspirations of black people. In his study, The Golden Age of Black Nationalism (1978), Moses does not concentrate exclusively on Garvey. Nevertheless he devotes ample space to him and his book is important in that it provides a different way of looking at black nationalist ideologies. Starting from the premise that nationalist philosophies have always

been conservative in that early emigrationists particularly, sought to preserve elements of European culture such as Christianity and civilization as taught by whites and transport them into an African context, Moses has argued that Garvey fits solidly into this tradition. The evidence he cites for this is that Garvey announced his conservative intentions in the title of his movement which was the Universal Negro Improvement and Conservation Association and African Communities League. What Moses neglects to illustrate is that the suffix was dropped from its title and by 1916 it had become simply the UNIA.

In viewing Garvey as traditional and conservative, Moses is concerned with what he sees as the conservative aspects of Garvey's philosophy. His love of pageantry, parades and the inversion of colour concepts are seen as imitations of European traditions and although appreciating the force of Garvey's ideas on black people, Moses does not do himself justice when he neglects to illustrate not only the significance and real importance of black pride, but the significance of Garveyism altogether. Rather, the substance of Moses' argument appears to be that Garvey was merely a reverse racist, whose arguments appealed more to emotion than logic, and as such, were devoid of any realistic analysis or appraisal of black oppression.<sup>5</sup>

None of the secondary sources outlined above isolate black pride properly as the central and dynamic aspect of Garvey's total philosophy. The contribution this study hopes to make is to provide such a focus by looking at the way in which all the dimensions of the UNIA were woven together into a coherent whole, centered around the ideal of black pride. The intention is to provide a sympathetic

portrayal of Garvey, seeing his ideas as a product of his time and to give a fuller expression of the international scope of his movement insofar as Garvey's vision was pan-African. The emphasis will be on black pride in the American context and also in Jamaica and England after Garvey's expulsion from the United States. One of the limitations of existing sources is that they tend to ignore Garvey's last years completely, or if given attention at all, they are treated in a cursory fashion and are seen as no longer applicable as they were outside of the American context. This may be in part true in an examination of Garvey's impact on America but if the stress is to be on Garvey's ideas, then whether within the American context or without they are relevant.

The thesis is divided into three sections. The first deals with American black nationalist leaders and their philosophies in the 19th century as precursors to Garvey and his UNIA looking specifically at the recurring manifestations of race pride, solidarity and consciousness, and their relationship to the shaping of a black identity. In doing this, the objective is to place Garvey's ideas into a broad historical perspective thus overcoming the risk of viewing Garvey and his ideas as set apart from the black nationalist tradition which had enjoyed a long history before his arrival in the United States. The intention of the first chapter is also to provide a working definition of black nationalism as a tradition, to illustrate its differences, continuity and the forces which shaped it. This is important for an understanding of the historical roots of Garveyism and the elements from the 19th century tradition which he adapted in modified form to a 20th century context, and in turn, added ideas of his own.

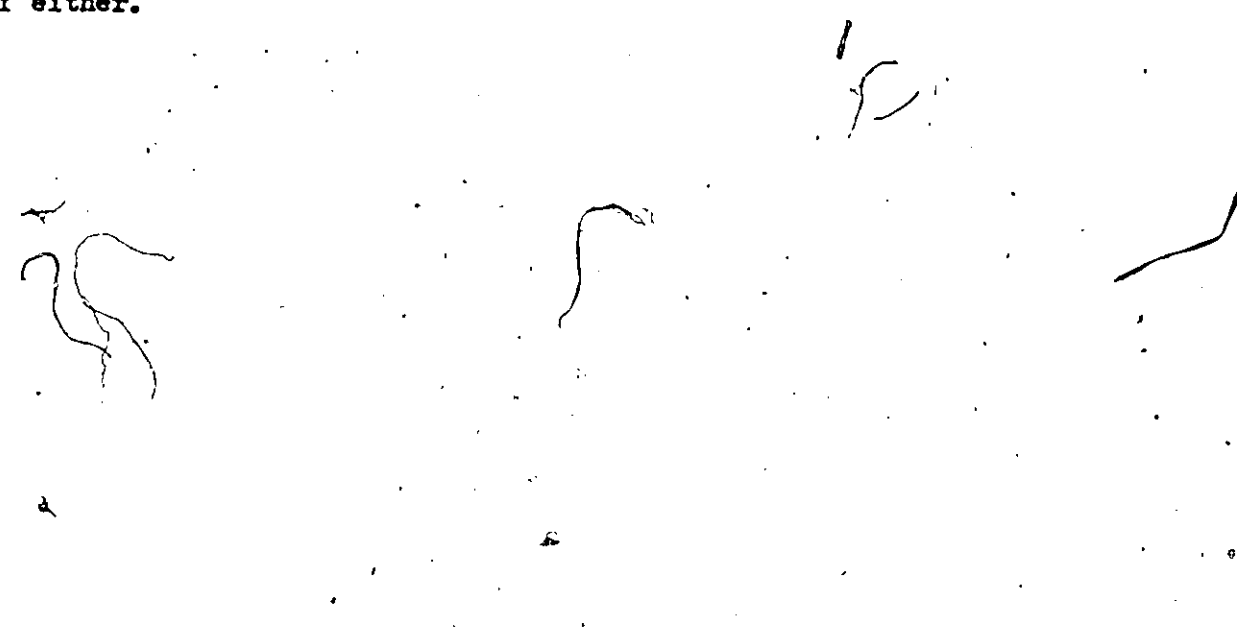
The second chapter deals with Garvey's emergence as a race leader, and traces the growth of his philosophy from his native Jamaica, through to his experiences in South and Central America, London, and eventually the United States. It also acknowledges 19th century influences and his early 20th century pan-African contacts made during his brief stay in London. As the focus of this chapter is particularly on Garvey's work in the United States, numerous speeches and articles published at that time, primarily from his Philosophy and Opinions, provide much of the data for an appraisal of his ideas on black pride.

The final chapter is divided conveniently from the second by Garvey's deportation from the United States, after which, he went initially to Jamaica, his native island and shortly thereafter to London only in this instance on a permanent basis. It deals with Garvey's last years and demise as a race leader, during which he struggled to revive his movement. The emphasis is still on blackness and black pride as a consistent theme in Garvey's thinking and as such, provides continuity even though the issues to which Garvey was responding in the 1930's were markedly different from those of his earlier years.

Garvey was the first black nationalist in the United States to place particular emphasis on blackness and black pride. This marked his departure from his 19th century predecessors who, as the following chapter will illustrate, devoted their attention towards race rather than colour. Although the two are clearly related, they do have different points of emphasis in that race pride to the 19th century leaders meant racial hegemony, a feeling of togetherness, and did not

focus as Garvey later did on blackness as a concept with all the connotations of black is beautiful. It is true that to the 19th century nationalists, black people were the objects of their attention, but it was only insofar as their blackness marked them off as a distinct race. By discussing black nationalism and its development in the 19th century, the belief is that the philosophical framework of Garvey and the way it forms an ideological continuum to the earlier tradition will bring about a more complete understanding of Garvey and the source of his ideas.

While the intention is to provide a sympathetic portrayal of Garvey, it is necessary to combine this with a more critical approach, weighing the relative merits and de-merits of his program and ideas on the best strategy for black liberation. It must however be kept in mind that Garvey's ideas were a product of his time and while in many ways they may appear to be, from today's standpoint, utterly utopian, they were essentially shaped by the difficulties black people faced in a world where whites had power and influence, and blacks had none of either.



## Footnotes for Introduction

1. E.D. Cronon, Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1955), pp. 73-102, 177-183; Tony Martin, Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1976), pp. 67-77.
2. E.D. Cronon, Black Moses, passim.
3. Theodore G. Vincent, Black Power and The Garvey Movement (San Francisco: Ramparts Press, 1976), pp. 107-149, 187-215, 215-251.
4. Tony Martin, Race First, pp. 89-110, 110-151, 221-273.
5. Wilson Jeremiah Moses, The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925 (Hamden Connecticut: Archon Books, 1978), pp. 143, 215, 264, 266-267.



## CHAPTER ONE

NINETEENTH CENTURY BLACK NATIONALISTS IN THE UNITED STATES:  
PRECURSORS TO MARCUS GARVEY

nowhere in the world, with few exceptions, are black men accorded equal treatment with white men, although in the same situation and circumstances, but on the contrary are . . . denied the common rights due to human beings for no other reason than their race and color.

-UNIA Declaration of Rights, 1920.<sup>1</sup>

Black nationalist philosophies grew out of two fundamental problems in American society, slavery in the ante-bellum era, and the denial of full citizenship and equality to black people once slavery had been abolished. The whole trend of black nationalist thought in the 19th century had the subjugated status of blacks as its focus, and in this context, unified action, or at least some form of racial solidarity was offered as compensation for the discriminatory treatment enforced upon blacks by whites.

The black nationalist themes voiced by leaders in the 19th century centered around such ideas as race progress, race pride, the redemption of Africa, and the uplift of the whole black race. Among the leaders who voiced these themes were Martin R. Delaney, Henry M. Turner; George Washington Williams, Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois. It must be stressed however that 19th century black nationalism was not an exact or static phenomenon and as such, race leaders did not espouse precisely the same doctrine, but expressed their versions in a variety of ways, often finding themselves sharply at variance with one another. Rather than stress the differences of 19th century black leaders, or examine them as

a series of peculiar specimens whose ideas have no common connection, an attempt will be made to relate their views on the race question to the black nationalist tradition as a whole. Their ideas were to become the trademarks of black nationalism, and many would become enmeshed in Carvey's philosophy although in modified form.

On the whole, periods which experienced a marked decline in the status of blacks were accompanied by a rise in black nationalist activities. Effectively barred from participating in mainstream America, blacks were thrown back upon themselves, and if those who espoused a black nationalist doctrine share anything in common, it is the fact that they accepted a separatist solution as the last alternative to racial injustices in America. This was particularly true during the 1850's, the decade during which widespread interest in emigration and black nationalist solutions emerged. The leaders of this particular period included Martin R. Delaney and Bishop Henry M. Turner, two distinguished members of the race.

Delaney was born of free black parents in Charleston Virginia in 1812, became a journalist working for a time on Fredrick Douglass' North Star and eventually a doctor of medicine.<sup>2</sup> Henry M. Turner who was also born of free black parents in South Carolina in 1834, was initially ordained an evangelist with the Southern Methodist Church but after meeting with racial discrimination and attempts to exclude blacks from the services, he joined the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1858, trained for the ministry and was assigned to a parish in Washington D.C.<sup>3</sup> Both leaders had at some time been agitators for the abolition of slavery and equal rights in the ante-bellum era but turned to emigration as a result of being frustrated

in their attempts to level the barriers of race prejudice. As the power of slavery appeared to become more firmly entrenched in the South with the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law and Compromise of 1850, coupled with the Dred Scott Decision of 1857, they despaired of ever finding a place as free and equal citizens in the United States. However, when the Civil War broke out in 1861, and the Emancipation Proclamation was issued two years later, both Delaney and Turner saw much more than a glimmer of hope for black people in the defeat of the Confederacy, the destruction of the slave regime, and the granting of political rights to the former slaves.

To contend however, that the end of the Civil War effected an immediate and fundamental change in the position of blacks would be overstating the case. At first they were denied the vote in all states with the exception of New York and parts of New England. In the South, the newly formed state legislatures sought to retain their former system of race relations by a combination of intimidation and constitutional means, enacting a series of black codes designed to keep black people slaves in everything but name. When in 1867, ten of the Confederate states refused to ratify the 14th amendment, it became clear to the North that Reconstruction could only be achieved by force. Thus, 1867-1877 became the period during which concrete congressional legislation was passed under the Radical attempt to enforce these measures through a combination of legal and military force.<sup>4</sup>

In 1868 and 1870 respectively, the 14th and 15th amendments were incorporated into the United States Constitution, prohibiting discriminatory laws, and giving blacks the vote. When 1875 witnessed

the passage of a comprehensive Civil Rights Bill it appeared that emancipation was not merely a proclamation but indeed a fact. For the first time in the history of the United States, it looked as if black people were well on the way to being ensured full equality before the law and equality of treatment in public places. As a consequence the outlook of Delaney and Turner in the Reconstruction years veered away from nationalism.

Believing that emancipation would mean full citizenship for black people, Delaney had obtained a position as recruiting agent and examining physician for black troops during the Civil War, and for part of the Reconstruction era worked in the Freedmen's Bureau attempting to protect the rights of newly freed blacks. He was also engaged in local politics for a time in Charleston, South Carolina. Turner likewise played a significant part in petitioning the Union to recruit black troops at the outbreak of the War and eventually left the AME Church to work in the Freedmen's Bureau in Georgia.

The interest of Delaney and Turner in mainstream politics came to an abrupt end, however, in 1876 and 1877. Following the failure of Reconstruction, the Republican Party turned from advocating the black man's cause to an acceptance of the Southern system of race relations. The result was the gradual re-establishment of conservative white supremacy in the South under governments led exclusively by the Democratic Party, and a repeal of the Civil Rights Act of 1875 which was declared unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court. This convinced Turner and Delaney that the only future which black people could be sure of in the United States was one of virtual re-enslavement and political impotence.<sup>5</sup>

In response to deteriorating circumstances, Delaney embarked on a black nationalist career, voicing the sentiment that black people had similarities with other stateless minority groups. "We are a nation within a nation;" he said, "as the Poles in Russia, the Hungarians in Austria, the Welsh, Irish and Scotch in the British dominions."<sup>6</sup> He appealed to blacks to unite, and to establish their own separate territory and existence and advocated their return to Africa.

Delaney's nationalism did not stem from an emotional attachment to Africa. In fact, he would have repudiated emigration if blacks had been given the opportunity to participate in mainstream America. As this did not seem forthcoming, his nationalist doctrine was invoked as a response to the rejection of blacks by whites. Thus, emigration was in a sense, a reluctant solution,

We love our country, dearly love her, but she don't love us - she despises us; and bids us begone, driving us from her embraces; but we shall not go where she desires us; but when we do go, whatever love we have for her, we shall love the country none the less that receives us as her adopted children.<sup>7</sup>

Delaney was not willing to consider any form of emigration which involved white sponsorship, blacks he felt, could direct such schemes for themselves, and aid their own liberation from white control and influence. This was the basis of his objection to the colonization of Liberia, under the auspices of the American Colonization Society,

Liberia is not an independent Republic: in fact it is not an independent nation at all; but a poor miserable mockery - a burlesque on a government - a pitiful dependency on the American Colonizationists, the Colonization Board at Washington city, in the District of Columbia, being the Executive and Government, and the principal man, called President, in Liberia, being the echo - a mere parrot.

At first, rather than look towards Africa, Delaney advocated the creation of a black nation in the western hemisphere. Blacks he

contended would not be driven away, but would stay put on the American continent, moving to Mexico, Central America, the West Indies or South America.<sup>9</sup> Eventually without explanation, he changed his mind, embracing a vision of an independent African nation to be respected by all, and to which the world would pay commercial tribute.<sup>10</sup>

Delaney, the exponent of several black nationalist ideas, struck an ideological chord of racial pride in black America. Like Garvey later, his contention was that all schemes designed to help black people should be carried out and put into effect by them. In other words, Delaney called for racial self-determination.<sup>11</sup> His philosophy was also pan-African, in the sense that he believed black people on every continent of the globe had a common destiny, and the liberation of all necessarily had to be the goal before anything worthwhile could be accomplished for the race.<sup>12</sup> Here then was an important element in the 19th century black nationalist tradition which had been articulated by Delaney at least four decades prior to the arrival of Garvey in the United States. Whether or not Garvey was aware of Delaney's ideas, Delaney's concept of an African nation and the pan-African elements in his thinking lay the foundation for the growth and development of the UNIA. In addition, like Booker T. Washington in the late 19th century, Delaney emphasized the utility of a practical education which could be applied to everyday life, forming a solid base upon which an independent black nation could be erected. Long before Washington appeared on the scene he urged blacks to commence at the bottom and work upwards,

This has been one of our greatest mistakes - we have gone in advance of ourselves. We have commenced at the superstructure of the building, instead of the foundation - at the top instead of the bottom. We should first be mechanics and common tradesmen, and professions as a matter of course would grow out of the wealth made thereby.<sup>13</sup>

Although to a great extent sharing the spotlight with Delaney, of the two, Turner was the more ardent exponent of emigration to Africa in this period, and perhaps its most prominent advocate in the 19th century. Espousing a philosophy of black nationalism from the end of Reconstruction to the outbreak of World War I when he died, his ideas more than those of any other leader seem to have given black nationalism direction, focus, and emphasis. His most noteworthy contribution and an important precursor of Garveyism came from his emphasis upon black pride, and the need for black people to respect themselves and to cease striving to be white. By employing fiery rhetoric, he sought to keep black Americans aware of their African origins, and to mobilize them into taking steps to overcome their disadvantages in the United States.<sup>14</sup>

Towards the end of Reconstruction when it became clear to Turner that whites were not prepared to grant blacks, social, political and economic equality he became increasingly disillusioned with the treatment of blacks in America. Turner himself experienced discrimination in politics. He was elected to the Georgia Constitutional Convention in 1867, and the legislature in 1868, but was prevented from holding office by whites who sought to exclude blacks from participating.<sup>15</sup> Turner also expressed his antipathy towards the 1883 Supreme Court decision which declared the Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional. This he saw as tantamount to an admission by whites, that blacks could

not look to the government for protection and Turner and Delany embarked on a black nationalist career, advocating emigration to Africa where he believed blacks could establish a civilization of their own to serve as an emblem of dignity, and respectability for the race.

Turner's nationalism was founded on a vision of racial equality, and a desire to have the black man stand proud and assert his independence and manhood.<sup>16</sup> As the gap between American democratic theory, and actual racial practice widened, Turner urged emigration to Africa, where he believed colour would not dampen the social aspirations of black people. Unlike Delaney, he approved of Liberia,

the Negro. . . . He can return to Africa, especially to Liberia where a Negro government is already in existence, and learn the elements of civilization in fact; for human life is there sacred, and no man is deprived of it or any other thing that involves his manhood, without due process of law. So my decision is that there is nothing in the United States for the Negro to learn or try to attain to.<sup>17</sup>

Africa was not envisaged by Turner solely as a refuge for oppressed black Americans, rather, his interest in it was many sided. He also saw his mission as part of a Christian tradition, viewing the condition of Africans from a western cultural perspective, arguing in terms of the good of Christianity, and the civilizing influence of the presence of black Americans in Africa.<sup>18</sup> Despite Turner's condescension toward African standards, he did not view blackness in a negative way. In his writings, he spoke of blackness in a positive manner. Aware that whiteness, and white ideas were dominant, and that blackness for most people implied a lower standard of worth, Turner urged blacks to respect themselves, stressing black pride as an essential quality for the founding of a separate nation.

Everything that is satanic, corrupt, base and infamous is



denominated black, and all that constitutes virtue, innocence, religion, and that which is divine and heavenly, is represented white. Our Sabbath-school children, by the time they reach proper consciousness, are taught to sing to the laudation of white and to the contempt of black. Can any one with an ounce of common sense expect that these children, when they reach maturity, will ever have any respect for their black or colored faces, or the faces of their associates? 19

Turner's philosophy, embodied many other expressions of black nationalism, for example, religious nationalism. Using his church as a base from which to lead and direct the people, Turner argued that it was important for blacks to cease imitating whites, praying to a white God, and attending white churches. Instead, he urged them to establish their own churches, and worship a God made in their own image, thus liberating themselves from white influence. In saying this, he voiced opinions very much like those of Garvey a generation later.

We have as much right biblically and otherwise to believe that God is a Negro, as you buckra, or white people have to believe that God is a fine looking, symmetrical and ornamented white man. . . . Every race of people since time began who have attempted to describe their God by words, or by paintings, or by carvings, or by any other form of figure, have conveyed the idea that the God who made them and shaped their destinies was symbolized in themselves, and why should not the Negro believe that he resembles God as much so as other people? We do not believe that there is any hope for a race of people who do not believe that they look like God. 20

Although Turner maintained a strong interest in emigration, at no time did he urge mass exodus of black Americans to Africa since he recognized the folly of such a course. The majority of black Americans he claimed, were so imbibed with the concept of whiteness, that they had little, if any respect for anything black, and would be of no value in bringing about the 'uplift' of Africa, the liberation of blacks, and the creation of a nation to be admired and looked up to.

Two or three million are about all that have sense enough and vim enough to return to Africa and accomplish anything for themselves, for the race and for God. The scullionized black man, be he literate or a graduate from some college, or a minister, or a doctor, or a lawyer, or a Bishop, or a congressman, or a diplomat, would do no good in building up a nation for the race, for the reason that this class believes that white is God and black is the devil, and if they were to go to Africa and find themselves in a country where they had no white men to look up to and fawn before, we would have to rid the country of them either by expatriating them or hanging them, for they have neither confidence in or respect for their own race.<sup>21</sup>

Against the leadership of Booker T. Washington, who in his Atlanta Compromise Address of 1895, urged blacks to put aside questions of political and social equality, Turner contended that the black man who did not seek equality with whites, must necessarily be satisfied with degradation and second-class citizenship.<sup>22</sup> Of Washington's speech, Turner further added,

he will have to live a long time to undo the harm he has done our race. His remarks on social equality, which is nothing more than civil equality will be quoted by newspapers, magazines, periodicals, legislatures, congressmen, lawyers, judges and all grades of whites to prove that the Negro race is satisfied with being degraded.<sup>23</sup>

Social equality was to Turner, of prime importance, and if blacks could not achieve it in the United States, they must go to some African country where he believed they would.

Alongside an emigrationist sentiment, the interest of black people in their past, in the form of distinctive historical and literary works was also developing in the mid to late 19th century. Such works as J.W. Pennington's Text Book of the Origin and History of the Colored People (1841), Martin R. Delaney's The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States, (1852), and William C. Nell's Colored Patriots of the American

Revolution (1855), all dealt with the anomalous position of blacks in the United States. Prominent among these black writers was George Washington Williams, born in Pennsylvania, and educated in Massachusetts. In 1883, he published a two volume study entitled History of the Negro Race in America 1619-1880, which earned him an eminent reputation as a black historian, and as John Hope Franklin has observed, his was "the first historical study by a Negro to be taken seriously by American scholars."<sup>24</sup>

The forces which motivated Williams to write his history were many. As he stated in the preface to his first volume, he was asked to deliver a speech on July 4, 1876, at Avondale Ohio. Determined to prepare a speech on the topic of black Americans, Williams began an investigation of records and other sources in order to secure the necessary material. His oration was warmly received and this gave him encouragement to pursue the subject in greater depth.<sup>25</sup> More importantly though, his prime-mover was a genuine interest in the black race as a whole, not only in the United States, but also in Africa. Realizing that black history had to a great extent been ignored, Williams attempted to rectify this. He contended, "I modestly strive to lift the Negro race to its pedestal in American history."<sup>26</sup> and was convinced that "Such a history would give the world more correct ideas of the colored people, and incite the latter to a greater effort in the struggle for citizenship and manhood."<sup>27</sup>

In the tradition of his contemporaries, Williams could not escape the prejudices of his own time, judging the African from a western standpoint, and African beauty through western lenses. He argued that those who conformed to the Caucasian standard of beauty,

were the most elevated of the African race and by elevated, Williams meant that black people on some parts of the African continent were more civilized in a western sense than on others. Thus, his concept of race pride was at times paradoxical.<sup>28</sup>

Williams sought to dispel certain myths concerning the inferiority of black people and their inherent incapacity to achieve anything worthwhile. Against those who would argue that racial differences between blacks and whites were linked with intellect, he stressed the part played by environmental factors, contending that brain power had nothing to do with eugenics.<sup>29</sup> He pointed to the history of the black race in parts of Africa as offering indubitable evidence against the theory that blacks were lacking in culture, intelligence, and incapable of self-government.

It is also apparent from the architecture, and other historical evidences of their character, that dark or black races, with more or less of the Negro physiognomy, were in the earliest period of their known history cultivated and intelligent, having kingdoms, art, and manufactures.<sup>30</sup>

Although not an advocate of emigration, or the colonization of Africa which he viewed as an impractical scheme, Williams admired the black colony founded in Liberia. He saw it as an example for the race and civilization as a whole and was especially concerned with the Christianizing influences he saw at work there.<sup>31</sup>

the republic of Liberia stands, and should stand until its light shall have penetrated the gloom of Africa, and until the heathen shall gather to the brightest of its shining. May it stand through the ages as a Christian republic, as a faithful light-house along the dark and trackless seas of African paganism!<sup>31</sup>

Other black nationalist ventures also won the attention and praise of Williams, most notably the work of The African Methodist Episcopal

Church under the leadership of Bishop Turner, and other prominent blacks. His admiration for the church lay in the fact that it had been created and maintained by blacks, thus teaching a valuable lesson in civilization, religion and self-government.<sup>32</sup>

Although Williams held certain black nationalist schemes in high esteem, he was not a black nationalist per se. He embodied many nationalist sentiments in his writing but his ultimate goal was the integration of blacks into mainstream America and his technique for achieving this was in many respects similar to Delaney's, and the one Booker T. Washington would appeal to towards the end of the 19th century. Like Washington and Delaney, Williams stressed the utility of a practical education, although he did not urge blacks to begin at the bottom and work to the top. What he did say was that a practical education and manual occupations were useful, required intelligence and skill, and were thus honourable.<sup>33</sup> Williams' vision was also pan-African in the sense that he saw the destiny and uplift of the African continent as the responsibility of American blacks, once they had established a secure position at home. Eventually, he looked forward to a link between Africa and America, bonded by ties of Christianity and trade.<sup>34</sup>

Of Williams then, it can be said that he did in some degree, reflect the black nationalist sentiments of his time. While his chief aim, like that of Delaney and Turner, was in pointing to the achievements of black people, instilling in them a feeling of pride, respect for their heritage, and a sense of their own worth, he parted company with the emigrationists since his ultimate goal was not to found a separate nation, but to convince white America of the black man's fitness for

first-class citizenship.

By the 1890's, the system of segregation which had been slowly emerging after the collapse of Reconstruction had to all intents and purposes crystallized and black Americans were set apart in transportation, restaurants, theatres, toilet facilities and many other services. Condoning this practice, the Supreme Court handed down the Plessy v Ferguson decision in 1896 which held that separate facilities for blacks, if equal in quality to those provided for whites, were not illegal. In fact, this "separate but equal" doctrine was never honoured in practice as the facilities provided for blacks were of a grossly inferior quality. In addition, disfranchisement began to take place encouraged by the poll tax, the receipts for which black people were more often than not unable to furnish, and two other devices, literary tests, and the notorious grandfather clause which enfranchised only those whose grandfathers had voted, thereby automatically excluding the majority of blacks. By the turn of the century they were effectively barred from voting.<sup>35</sup>

In the face of such adverse circumstances and the complete undoing of even the minimal gains made during Reconstruction, an alternative to emigration appeared with the rise of a new generation of black leaders, two of the most notable being Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois. Although incorporating elements from the older tradition of Delaney, Turner, and Williams, such as the need for a positive race identity and the building of a progressive black economy, Washington and Du Bois saw any form of exodus or back-to-Africa movement as futile. If segregation and disfranchisement restricted the opportunities open to blacks in America, then the solution as

they saw it did not lie in emigration, but in economic endeavour.

The 1890's then, marks a transition period in the black nationalist tradition. Although Turner was still active as a race leader, his espousal of emigration as the only means of salvation for black people placed his ideas on the race question firmly within an earlier tradition. His experiences in the post-bellum era, the hope held out after emancipation, and then the reversion to a status barely removed from slavery convinced him that equality for black people could never be realized.

To this day, Washington and Du Bois remain enigmatic and even in the light of the 20th century, categorizing their ideas is fraught with difficulties. Although Washington is usually thought of as an accommodationist, teaching his followers to accept rather than protest inequality, and Du Bois as an exponent of civil rights and socialism, a reassessment of their writings and speeches supports the view that neither of them was unique and set apart from the black nationalist tradition. Black nationalist ideas permeated both their philosophies even though they stood in opposition to one another on a variety of issues.

Born a slave in Franklin County, Virginia, four years prior to emancipation, Booker T. Washington rose to become a powerful orator and an influential black spokesman especially after his speech at the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta Georgia, in 1895. In his speech, often termed the 'Atlanta Compromise,' Washington underlined his prescription for the uplift of black Americans based on industrial, vocational, and domestic training.<sup>36</sup> In a real sense, Washington was an accommodationist, and his

recommendation that black people should steer clear of questions concerning political and civil rights confirms this, especially as it offered no challenge to the disfranchisement and segregation which was taking place in his era. In addition, his emphasis on manual occupations endorsed the inferior job opportunities offered southern blacks throughout this period which placed them in the lowest possible of economic situations. However, a more in depth analysis of Washington reveals that his ideas were more complex than this and that there was another side to his philosophy. By examining his work, certain parallels can be seen between his ideas and those of earlier black nationalists like Turner and Delaney.

Washington, like the black nationalists before him, also emphasized race pride, racial solidarity, black self-determination and the importance of black economic development, but his ideas were dressed in terms which did not appear to challenge white supremacy. Washington took the view that before blacks could determine their own destiny in any meaningful way, they must first become self-sufficient by establishing a firm foundation on which to build.

It would have seemed that since self-support, industrial independence, is the first condition for lifting up any race, that education in theoretical and practical agriculture, horticulture, dairying, and stockraising should have occupied the first place in our system.

He went on to say that all races had become self-sufficient by first laying an economic foundation, beginning in the cultivation and ownership of land, and that blacks must emulate this. "Agriculture is, or has been," he said, "the basic industry of nearly every race or nation that has succeeded."<sup>38</sup> Thus, he claimed, "No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as



in writing a poem. It is at the bottom of life we must begin and not at the top."<sup>39</sup>

Washington attempted to placate southern whites, and at the same time, carve out a place for the black man in America. Once black people had something worthwhile to contribute, the racial problem he argued would be solved. He therefore avoided political agitation, contending equality would come once the race had proven itself to be an indispensable part of America.

The wisest among my race understands that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremest folly, and that progress, in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing. No race that has anything to contribute to the markets of the world is in any degree ostracized.<sup>40</sup>

However, Washington did not advocate that the black man be eternally relegated to the lowest rung of the economic ladder, he saw industrial education as paving the way for future generations, although this would be a slow evolutionary process,

But it is asked, would you confine the Negro to agriculture, mechanics, and domestic arts, etc? Not at all; but along the lines that I have mentioned is where the stress should be laid just now and for many years to come. We will need and must have many teachers and ministers, some doctors and statesmen; but these professional men will have a constituency or foundation from which to draw support just in proportion as the race prospers along the economic lines that I have just mentioned.<sup>41</sup>

On race pride and unity, Washington was as emphatic as the black nationalists before him. He preached that pride was an important element in the progress of any race, and that without this quality it could not succeed.<sup>42</sup> Washington also stressed the importance of black history, arguing that more attention should be devoted to discovering the true history of American blacks to instill

in them a feeling of pride, and respect and sense of achievement.

We should have so much pride that we would spend more time in looking into the history of the race, more effort and money in perpetuating in some durable form its achievements, so that from year to year, instead of looking back with regret, we can point to our children the rough path through which we grew strong and great.<sup>43</sup>

What set Washington apart from nationalists like Delaney and Turner, was the fact that he did not embrace any sort of emigration scheme, nor did he overtly advocate the building of a black nation. While Washington did have a certain respect for emigration, he saw it as futile. Blacks he believed, had absorbed too much of the American culture to entertain seriously the idea of going back to Africa, and even if they did, the sheer numbers involved rendered it an impossible undertaking.<sup>44</sup> Despite this fundamental difference, Washington, as indicated did have many black nationalist strains running through his doctrine of self-help and industrial education. Nevertheless, Washington with his conservative political attitudes, sought solutions to the problems of black Americans within the existing political structure. Throughout his life he remained convinced that the system would eventually work for them.

W.E.B. Du Bois, a northern black intellectual became active as a leader in the early 20th century. Du Bois was born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts in 1868 and after graduating from high school there in 1884, he went on to attend Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, and received his B.A. in 1888. In the same year, he went to Harvard, again as an undergraduate, and received another B.A. in 1890. After numerous letters and requests to President Hayes, Du Bois was able to secure a Slater Fund Fellowship to finance studies in

Berlin from 1892-1894. He returned to Harvard after almost three years in Europe, received his Ph.D. in 1896, and went on to pursue several activities, lecturing at Wilberforce, Pennsylvania, and at Atlanta University in Georgia. Eventually he participated in the formation of the Niagara Movement and the NAACP, serving as editor of The Crisis until 1934. The study of black Americans occupied a place of great importance in the life and work of Du Bois, as witnessed by the vast amount of material he left behind which examined the black experience from economic, political, historical, social, and a variety of other perspectives.<sup>45</sup> An evaluation of Du Bois's career necessarily invites much controversy since he remained a complex figure for more than half a century, constantly changing his ideas, politics and tactics.

Du Bois was instrumental in organizing the Niagara Movement of 1906, and embodied in this organization was the belief that the problems of race in America, were capable of solution within the existing framework of constitutional democracy. The Niagara Movement had evolved with the aim of mobilizing black Americans, and instructing them in an effective use of their numbers.<sup>46</sup> As an organization it was shortlived and finally, it merged with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), in 1906, in which Du Bois became the most prominent official. During and after his editorship of The Crisis, Du Bois revised and expanded his ideas many times. In his formative years as a black spokesman, he identified with liberal reform but by degrees, placed more emphasis on economic and international issues, particularly pan-Africanism, an issue which marked his political maturity. Despite his changing ideology,

the uplift of blacks was the force which motivated him and which provided his strongest connection with black nationalist thought. He repeatedly used The Crisis and other channels to agitate on behalf of blacks, and expound his philosophy of cultural nationalism and pan-Africanism, and instill in his followers a feeling of race pride.

As a protest leader in the early twentieth century, Du Bois developed the concept of a 'black elite,' using the term the 'Talented Tenth' which would consist of a college educated elite, paving the way for racial advancement and the participation of blacks in mainstream America.

It is our duty, then, not drastically but persistently to seek out colored children of ability and genius, to open up to them broader industrial opportunity and, above all, to find that Talented Tenth and encourage it by the best and most exhaustive training in order to supply the Negro race and the world with leaders, thinkers, and artists.<sup>47</sup>

Criticizing Washington's vision of racial uplift, Du Bois contended that never was a nation elevated by striving from the bottom upwards. Progress for the race he argued could only come about under the leadership of a black educated elite who would set the standard for the masses to emulate.<sup>48</sup> He did not attempt to persuade blacks to turn away from politics, but urged them to register their discontent against disfranchisement, prejudice and discrimination, and in their isolation from the mainstream, knit-together in order to attain full citizenship rights.

On joining the NAACP, Du Bois, in his role as editor of The Crisis proved himself an ardent exponent of race pride, employing this concept as a technique for black affirmation. He claimed that race pride would fight back and persistently make demands, and said

that only the ashamed members of the race would submit.<sup>49</sup> Aware that white America had long cast blacks in an unfavourable light, "For five centuries, they have exhausted every trick of ridicule and caricature on black folk: . . . everything and anything to make the Negroes ridiculous,"<sup>50</sup> he launched through The Crisis, a program to correct distortions, and instill in black America the esteem and self respect of which it had been robbed.

Embodied in Du Bois's philosophy was the concept of cultural nationalism. He argued that black people had made positive contributions to American society, particularly music.

the Negro folk-song-the rhythmic cry of the slave-stands today not simply as the sole American music, but as the most beautiful expression of human experience born this side of the seas. It has been neglected, it has been persistently mistaken and misunderstood; but notwithstanding, it still remains as the singular spiritual heritage of the nation and the greatest gift of the Negro people.<sup>51</sup>

Artistically, he urged blacks to show interest and pride in African culture and traditions, through the medium of literature, painting, dance and other art forms.<sup>52</sup> For Dubois, cultural achievement would serve as a base for racial uplift, unity and solidarity, and as a symbol of racial pride and heritage to display to the world.<sup>53</sup>

An important black nationalist theme in the many writings and editorials of Du Bois was pan-Africanism. In addition, he was instrumental in the organization of pan-African conferences in the early and mid 20th century. Aware that every effort had been made to portray Africa and the Africans as a people without culture, civilization or history, Du Bois devoted much time to correcting such distortions and uplifting the image of blacks. He called for Africans' self-determination, control of their territory, and an

end to the imposition of alien western values which had been superimposed upon the continent.<sup>54</sup> In an attempt to instill in black Americans a feeling of pride in their African past, he pointed to a history of which they should be proud, and indicated that African cultural values still exercised a pervasive influence in America, "The shadow of a mighty Negro past flits through the role of Ethiopia the shadowy and of Egypt the Sphinx."<sup>55</sup>

Although Du Bois felt a deep sense of kinship and affinity with Africa seeing it as his fatherland, at no time did he advocate emigration. His interest in Africa was primarily cultural, more of an emotional attachment. He realized that the majority of American blacks, while still retaining a cultural heritage unique to them, had also absorbed elements of the American culture and tended to view Africa as an alien, undesirable land.<sup>56</sup> Rather, Du Bois likened his pan-Africanism to Zionism, seeing it as an appeal to racial unity and group action to bring about the advancement of blacks on every continent of the globe,

The African movement means to us what the Zionist movement must mean to the Jews, the centralization of race effort and the recognition of a racial front. To help bear the burden of Africa does not mean any lessening of effort in our own problem at home. Rather, it means increased interest. For any ebullition of action and feeling that results in an amelioration of the lot of Africa tends to ameliorate the condition of colored peoples throughout the world. And no man liveth to himself.<sup>57</sup>

If it is hard to do justice to the wealth of material Du Bois left behind, it is even harder to categorize his ideas on black liberation. From the early to mid 20th century he constantly changed his emphasis as he began to realize that the issue of race was more complex than he had at first thought. While Garvey was

in the United States, Du Bois was still active in the NAACP, and if we attempt to pin down his underlying philosophy despite his changing position, he always hoped that black people would be allowed to participate on equal terms with whites in mainstream America while at the same time preserving their racial heritage and identity. He voiced this sentiment when he claimed,

One ever feels his twoness, - an American Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; . . . He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the door of opportunity closed roughly in his face.<sup>58</sup>

As illustrated by the discussion above, 19th century black nationalism was not a static phenomena, but a varying one and as such, black nationalist leaders cannot be grouped into precise categories. As a philosophy which evolved over time, and was directly related to the needs and experiences of black people in America, each leader brought to the tradition his own ideas and particular points of emphasis. Delaney and Turner talked of race pride and unity within an emigrationist context, and although their contemporary Williams admired certain aspects of separatism, he did not endorse emigration but stressed the role of culture as a means of instilling pride in race. In this, Williams was not set apart from either Delaney or Turner, both stressed the role of culture as a means of instilling pride in race but for them it was to be won through racial self-determination and separation from whites. For Williams, knowledge of the African past was a different means of imparting race pride and solving racial conflict in the United States.

The later generation of black nationalists, Washington and Du Bois, were not more set apart from the tradition than Williams, both had striking points of similarity with their forerunners. Washington, like Delaney and Turner, called for racial self-determination but in a more covert manner which had conciliatory overtones. His fundamental point of departure with them was that he rejected emigration. Nevertheless, the elements of race pride in his thinking, which he believed could only be won through independent race efforts in the United States, linked him with the previous generation and furthermore, his interest in culture and the heritage of black people is suggestive of Williams' efforts on behalf of race pride. Du Bois also fits solidly into the tradition. Like the nationalists before him, his vision was pan-Africanism in focus, but like Williams and Washington he rejected emigration. Rather, Du Bois's interest in Africa formed an important part of the cultural aspect of his philosophy, and represented his way of teaching race pride.

An examination of the precursors of Marcus Garvey illustrates that his ideas did not occur in a vacuum or happen simply because there was a Garvey. Rather, he drew from elements of a persistent but changing ideology in black American thought. Like his predecessors, he contended that programs for black people should be designed and put into effect by them to teach race pride. The influence of the 19th century leaders on Garvey's philosophy becomes clearer when it is considered that he shared more in common with the earlier generation of Turner and Delaney than he did with Washington and Du Bois. Apart from the economic program advanced by Washington which Garvey embraced, he rejected Washington's conciliatory approach, and unlike Washington,



Garvey's nationalism was not centered around the view that blacks would eventually win the right to participate in mainstream America. With Du Bois who was to become Garvey's contemporary and rival in the 1920's, Garvey shared certain ideas on race pride but unlike Du Bois, he was not willing to combine this with black and white co-operation. Like Turner and Delaney, Garvey contended that black people must work for and by themselves.

Though having many points of similarity with Turner and Delaney, Garvey's view of Africa and Africans was more affirmative. He rejected the notion that Africans were a heathen and barbaric people in need of civilization as taught by blacks who had had the good fortune to be westernized. Neither was Africa for Garvey an asylum for the oppressed in the way that it was to Turner and Delaney, for him, it was the natural habitat for black people and the culture, albeit different from the west, a legitimate one. As part of the earlier tradition, Williams, although not an emigrationist had a valuable lesson for Garvey on the importance of black history and race achievements. Garvey's maturity however is in the fact that he liberated himself from the western standard of beauty, free from the prejudices of the 19th century, Garvey made no distinctions between black people living on certain parts of the African continent who conformed closely to Caucasian standards, and those who did not. The natural features of black people constituted their legitimate standard.

Garvey's particular contribution to black nationalism lies in his particular emphasis upon the concept of blackness which he injected into the tradition. Turner had articulated the need for a positive identification with blackness almost half a century earlier, but

Garvey gave it more emphasis and manifest expression, examining blackness from a variety of angles. This marks Garvey's parting of the ways with the 19th century black nationalists, he shared with them many ideas in common, but the notion of black pride formed the core of his philosophy and was, unlike members of the older generation his all-consuming interest.

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## CHAPTER TWO

GARVEY AND THE GROWTH OF THE UNIA:  
PEAK YEARS OF UNIA ACTIVITY

we are everywhere discriminated against and made to feel that to be a black man in Europe, America and the West Indies is equivalent to being an outcast and a leper among the races of men, no matter what the character and attainments of the black man may be.

-UNIA Declaration of Rights, 1920.<sup>1</sup>

Marcus Garvey was born in the parish of St Ann's Jamaica on August 17, 1887. He was reputed to have been descended from the Maroons, a group of full-blooded blacks who had lived independently in the mountains of Jamaica from 1664-1795 and perhaps because of his heritage, Garvey always loudly proclaimed immense pride in his blackness and tried to teach his followers the same. At an early age, Garvey displayed a keen interest in the plight of black workers on the island, viewing their common condition in terms of colour. Garvey recalled some years later,

I started to take a keen interest in the politics of my country and then I saw the injustice done to my race because it was black, and I became dissatisfied on that account.

In 1909, Garvey travelled to Central and South America visiting Costa Rica, Panama, Nicaragua, Spanish Honduras, Colombia and Venezuela. In every case he was confronted with the same problem, the exploitation of black workers. In Costa Rica, he attempted to find a solution by protesting to the British Consul in Port Limon, the capital city but was merely brushed aside. After a year away, Garvey returned to Jamaica where he petitioned the government, describing the conditions black West Indian migrants were forced to work under

in each of the countries he had visited, but was told that if conditions did not suit the workers, they should return home. In 1912, Garvey left Jamaica again this time for England where he worked initially around the docks of Cardiff, Liverpool and London. Here he made friends with African seamen with whom he exchanged views on the race question, and in turn, gained a wealth of information about conditions in Africa. It was Garvey's African contacts which led him into an association with the prominent Egyptian nationalist, Duse Mohammed Ali who had gone to England to attend school and by the time Garvey arrived, was editing a paper entitled, the African Times and Orient Review.<sup>3</sup> Garvey worked for a time as a messenger for Ali but more importantly, Garvey's employment in this capacity, broadened his newly established connection with the African world, a connection which extended to an elite from the Gold Coast and included barrister E.J.P. Brown, Dr Quartey-Papajio also a barrister, and Casely Hayford, lawyer and writer of two books, Ethiopia Unbound - Studies in Race Emancipation published in 1911, and The Truth About West African Land Question published two years later. All were in England protesting on behalf of the Gold Coast Aborigines Rights Protection Society against the Gold Coast's Forest Bill of 1911, while at the same time, contributing to the African Times and Orient Review.<sup>4</sup>

Although nowhere stated, it is probably safe to assume that Garvey would have been directly or at least indirectly influenced by ideas of the Gold Coast elite. In any event, Garvey's second wife, Amy Jacques, later attested that he learned much about Africa's ancient history, labour conditions and the potential of its mineral sources from Ali himself.<sup>5</sup> These experiences in England undoubtedly

exercised a powerful influence of Garvey. It was the first time that he had been exposed to ideas on African nationalism and this may go far in explaining his broad field of vision, and the pan-African elements in his philosophy. They mark the point at which Garvey's ideas on race became crystallized and when he began to interpret the oppression of workers in terms of colour rather than class. Not that Garvey did not recognize the existence of a class system, he clearly did as some of his later statements will illustrate, but having seen conditions in Jamaica and South and Central America, and hearing that the black man's lot was the same in Africa, he began to see the interests of blacks and whites as separate. Blackness as far as Garvey could see designated oppression, servitude and systematic exploitation wherever black people lived amongst whites, and under whatever political system.<sup>6</sup>

Garvey's ideas were also infused with elements of the long black nationalist tradition that had been developing in the United States throughout the 19th century. His Philosophy and Opinions which give a clear indication of his thoughts on race relations, illustrate this 19th century influence. His stress on African redemption, race unity, the building of an independent nation and the importance of black culture were all themes that had been articulated by Martin R. Delaney, Booker T. Washington and other 19th century black leaders. The parallels between the ideas of Garvey and Bishop Henry Turner however, appear more striking since, of the 19th century black nationalists, Turner was the only one to place emphasis not solely on race pride, but also on black pride. Garvey's ideas on the concept of blackness, its denigration and association with evil, and the need



for black people to respect their skin colour were strikingly reminiscent of Turner. Other nationalist leaders of the 19th century such as George Washington Williams, if they addressed the question of a black man's features, tended to use the white standard as their yardstick and in this sense, perpetuate the notion of a black man's inferiority.<sup>7</sup>

Garvey's break with Turner and the rest of the 19th century tradition lay in the broadening and further development of his ideas in their application to a 20th century context. He was more affirmative in his stance on blackness and although Turner evolved a brand of a black religion for the imparting of black pride, Garvey did not stop at religion, but went on to develop a host of techniques to instill pride in blackness in a predominantly white society. Black pride permeated every aspect of Garvey's thought and program.

The articulation of blackness as a positive attribute also affected Garvey's vision of Africa and in this he shifted further away from the tradition of the 19th century. If blackness was a positive attribute in its own right, then so too the distinctive culture of black people who inhabited African countries. Thus, unlike many of the previous generation of leaders who viewed Africa as being in need of civilization as taught by Americans, Garvey liberated himself from the American standard. He spoke of African uplift but in a more positive manner and without the negative connotations of his predecessors. African uplift for Garvey meant economic and political independence which could only be won through the fostering of a positive black identity.

After a fairly lengthy stay in England, Garvey sailed from

Southampton dock for Jamaica, arriving on July 15, 1914. Only five days after his arrival, he formed the Universal Negro Improvement and Conservation Association and African Communities League although several words were dropped from its title two years after its formation.

This was an organization dedicated to racial uplift with the long term goal of uniting black people in the world into a collective body to create a government and to establish a country of their own.

Initially, Garvey planned to establish industrial and educational institutions closely modelled after Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. However, he met with opposition from the fair-skinned Jamaican elite who viewed all-black organizations with contempt. Their chief objective was to surmount the racial barrier by intermarriage and assimilation into white society. Garvey then found himself in a dilemma.

Men and women as black as I and even more so, had believed themselves white under the West Indian order of society. . . . I had to decide whether to please my friends and be one of the 'black whites' of Jamaica and be reasonably prosperous, or come out openly, and help improve and protect the integrity of the black millions, and suffer. I decided to do the latter.

The UNIA failed to gain a secure foothold in Jamaica because of the three tier caste system under which West Indians lived. Race consciousness and pride in a black skin was the foundation upon which Garvey's movement rested. Unfortunately, the majority of Jamaicans were not so much concerned with consciousness of race as consciousness of differences in colour and the lighter the better. Given the prevalence of such ideas, Garvey found it impossible to teach black pride when Jamaicans were so divided amongst themselves. After two years of struggle with the UNIA in Jamaica, Garvey decided to move

its headquarters to Harlem New York, the 'Black Metropolis,' in an attempt to build his movement into a viable organization.

In the United States, blacks had been given a rude awakening due to the deterioration in their social, political and economic status which had occurred during and after World War I. Here Carvey saw a chance for his movement to thrive. Black leaders in the United States first saw the war effort as an ideal time to force the question of race relations into the arena of politics. The announced purpose of the United States entry into World War I was the preservation of democracy and it was the expectation of black leaders that the democratic ideals would be extended to Afro-Americans, if they demonstrated their commitment by participating in the war. The Field Secretary for the NAACP, William Pickens expressed this renewed optimism, saying,

For real democracy the American Negro will live and die. His loyalty is always above suspicion, but his extraordinary spirit in the present war is born of his faith that on the side of his country and her allies is the best hope for such democracy.

The entry of the United States into World War I caused many changes in the hitherto established pattern of life for black Americans. Prior to the war, the majority of them lived in the South and worked on small farms as tenants or sharecroppers. As white men conscripted to fight left vacant places in the factories of the North and war industries greatly expanded, shortage of labour became a pressing problem, and one which was made even more severe by the end of immigration to the United States from Europe, formerly a source of cheap labour. At the same time, depressed agricultural conditions in the South, partly caused by the boll-weevil and floods

in Alabama and Mississippi in 1915, found many black families without any means of earning a living, while those employed as tenants and sharecroppers were entwined in a system of crop liens and never ending debt, able to eke out only a gaunt subsistence.<sup>10</sup>

Attracted by prospects of employment, higher wages, better housing, a higher standard of living, and the hope that entrance into industry would pave the way for future advancement, thousands of black families embarked on the long trek to the North. They were actively encouraged by the Federal Department of Labor's employment service and numerous industries in the North which sent representatives South to recruit workers.<sup>11</sup> George E. Hayes, founder of the National Urban League in 1911 analysed the forces behind the "Great Migration" in his study entitled, The Negro At Work in New York City and concluded that,

the call of higher wages in the North, have been unusually strong influences to concentrate the Negro in the cities. It is with him largely as with other wage-earners; the desire for higher wages and the thought of the larger liberty, especially in the North together with a restlessness under hum-drum, hard rural conditions and a response to the attractions of the city life that have had considerable force in bringing him to urban centers. Labor legislation in the South has played its part in the movement.<sup>12</sup>

Leaving rural areas, black migrants flocked to the cities in the years during and after World War I, placing for the first time the question of race relations into an urban setting.

The dream of a Northern utopia came to an abrupt halt as the influx of blacks gave rise to friction with whites. The latter saw the newcomers as a grave threat to their own security as a rapidly expanding population began to place a severe strain on already depleted housing facilities and blacks and whites found themselves

competing for the same places of accommodation. The lack of adequate services and the unfamiliarity of black people with city life, contributed to other social problems. Poverty, inadequate sanitation and dilapidated housing were the stark realities which black people faced daily in all the major urban areas across the United States. In 1917, conditions reached crisis point, culminating in racial riots in East St. Louis and Philadelphia.

With the increasing population of the North, there followed patterns of residential segregation. As black families moved to the inner cities, white families moved out to the suburbs, giving rise to the almost solid black communities of Harlem, and parts of Chicago, Philadelphia and Detroit. Blacks who thought that the move North would offer them a new kind of freedom were faced with discrimination in almost every walk of life. Separate and 'unequal' facilities were given the force of law and extended to public utilities, accommodation, schools, churches and a host of other services. Black soldiers who had enlisted in the armed forces fared no better, for although they served overseas and fought well, they were relegated to subordinate ranks, serving as stevedores and messboys, and placed in segregated camps where they were subjected to numerous indignities and assaults.<sup>13</sup>

The illusions that black Americans had entertained, were completely swept away with the close of the war in 1919. The democracy that the returning soldiers thought would be theirs, and for which they had fought, vanished into thin air as they returned to find themselves in the midst of a situation in many respects worse than the one they had left. The post-war recession caused major aggravation and

as always it was blacks who were hardest hit. A massive layoff of workers occurred during the recession when black people were pushed out of jobs they had secured during the labour shortage of the war years.<sup>14</sup> Again, racial tension led to race riots as anxious whites feared job competition and in the 'Red Summer' of 1919, there occurred some twenty-six riots, ranging from Texas and Washington D.C. to Chicago and Arkansas.

It was upon this scene that Marcus Garvey arrived with his movement geared towards black pride and liberation. In the United States, Garvey confronted a dejected black population. Both Bishop Henry Turner and Booker T. Washington had died a few years prior to his arrival in 1916, and although Du Bois filled this leadership vacuum for a time, his intellectual approach left him unable to articulate his brand of black nationalism, political agitation and civil rights in terms that could command the attention of the black masses whom the problems of urbanization and farm tenancy most directly affected. Thus, the time was ripe for Garvey; psychologically, economically, socially and politically there was a need for him and a response awaiting him. His particular brand of black nationalism gained wide currency and during his years as President General of the UNIA, Garvey commanded a massive black following, far larger than the membership of any black nationalist organization that had previously existed in the United States. The numerical strength of the UNIA is difficult to estimate but it is believed that it was somewhere in the region of 400,000 actual paid membership.<sup>15</sup> It is probably safe to assume that the number of people who identified with the movement was far larger.

Garvey's ability to stir the masses came from the context in which his ideas flourished; the urban setting provided him with a close-knit black community in which to spread his gospel of black pride. Equally important to Garvey's career and the shaping of his ideas were the disappointments of the post-war years which Roi Ottley, a black writer, succinctly defined in his study entitled New World A-Coming: Inside Black America. Writing from first-hand experience, he explained,

Garvey leaped into the ocean of black unhappiness at a most timely moment for a savior. He had witnessed the Negro's disillusionment mount with the progress of the World War. Negro soldiers had suffered all forms of Jim Crow, humiliation discrimination, slander, and even violence at the hands of the white civilian population. After the war, there was a resurgence of Ku Klux Klan influence; another decade of racial hatred and open lawlessness had set in, and Negroes again were prominent among the victims.<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, despite this obvious focus upon American problems, the main ideological basis upon which Garvey's movement was founded was the concept of blackness as the common denominator of a universally oppressed race. His organization was conceived in response to the oppression of black people everywhere and accordingly, Garvey's field of vision did not focus exclusively upon black people in the United States. Although he directed his affairs from there, his ideas encompassed black people in every country and on every continent of the globe. The objective of the UNIA was the uniting of black Americans, West Indians and Africans in the struggle for racial uplift. Garvey stated,

The Program of the Universal Negro Improvement Association is that of drawing together into one Universal whole, all the Negro peoples of the world, with prejudice toward none.

We desire to have every shade of color, even those with one drop of African blood in our fold; . . .

His long term goal was to free blacks everywhere from white control, and put an end to their exploitation. In other words, his organization attempted to tear down the system which perpetuated white supremacy and as a consequence kept black people in a servile position. Garvey's main concern was with the fact that a black skin was more a symbol of pity than respect, a hallmark of inferiority rather than a symbol of national greatness. He expressed this sentiment in his summation of the black experience,

As far as Negroes are concerned, in America we have the problem of lynching, peonage and dis-franchisement. In the West Indies, South and Central America we have the problem of peonage, serfdom, industrial and political governmental inequality. In Africa we have not only peonage and serfdom, but outright slavery,<sup>18</sup> racial exploitation and alien political monopoly.

It was this degree of suffering which Garvey realized, had produced in black people, a psychological demoralization; a loss of confidence in themselves as a race, and contempt for their black skins. Thus, having diagnosed their condition, Garvey attempted to effect a cure by transcending geographical boundaries, and waving the banner of black pride in order to awaken, unite and move into action a dispersed race.

my belief is founded upon a hard and horrible experience, not a personal experience, but a racial experience. The world has made being black a crime, and I have felt it in common with men who suffer like me, and instead of making it a crime I hope to make it a virtue.<sup>19</sup>

Garvey saw as his first task in the United States the need to re-educate blacks to liberate their minds from whiteness and white ideas and thus teach them to think as an independent race. During



his formative years in Harlem, Garvey attacked the leading black newspapers, in particular the Chicago Defender for the advertisements it carried urging black people, especially women, to buy skin bleachers and hair straightners, accompanied by the caption, "Light skin beauty over night," or "Take the kink out of your hair and be in society."<sup>20</sup> Although such advertisements provided a large source of income with which to run the papers, Garvey was more concerned with integrity than mere profit. He saw such propaganda as degrading to blacks and the characteristics which marked them off as a distinctive race. Urging black people to become white in Garvey's line of thought, was tantamount to an admission by the press that in order to be seen as worthwhile human beings, the natural features of black people must be obscured by artificial means.

As the UNIA gathered momentum, and new chapters were set up in South and Central America, on parts of the African continent, Jamaica and throughout the United States, Garvey saw the need for a weekly newspaper to unite the UNIA divisions and oppose the destructive propaganda of the black press which hailed conformity to whiteness and white standards as the criterion by which black people should assess themselves.<sup>21</sup> In 1918, he commenced publication of the Negro World which became the official mouthpiece of the UNIA until it ceased publication in 1933. Between 1922 and 1924, Garvey also published the Daily Negro Times but unfortunately, there is nothing in the existing historical record which gives any indication of the nature and scope of the paper.<sup>22</sup> The Negro World proved to be Garvey's longest lasting paper, his most powerful, and the means through which he was able to communicate his ideas to a world-wide.

audience. Among its editors were Claude McKay, the Jamaican born poet and novelist, William Ferris, also a writer, and T. Thomas Fortune, founder of the New York Age in the 1880's. McKay remained interested in Garvey's movement for only a short time, working as foreign correspondent. William Ferris worked on and off for the UNIA for twenty years, while T. Thomas Fortune, one of the Negro World's chief editors, worked in that capacity from 1923-1928, the year of his death.<sup>23</sup>

Through the pages of the Negro World, Garvey strove to develop a consciousness of race and pride in colour amongst his followers. To this end, numerous editorials were devoted to black history, the beauty in blackness, and the glories of the African past. Garvey refused to accept advertisements which could be in any way interpreted as demeaning to black people, remaining faithful to his contention that the natural hair, features, and the very colour of black people, constituted their standard of beauty and should not or could not be assessed in the light of alien white characteristics. Thus, blackness for Garvey had its own intrinsic quality and virtue, and in advocating black awareness, he urged his followers to lift up the image of blackness in every phase of their lives.

Take down the pictures of white women from your walls.  
Elevate your own women to that place of honor. They  
are for the most part the burden-bearers of the race.  
Mothers! give your children dolls that look like them  
to play with and cuddle. They will learn as they grow  
older to love and care for their own children, and not  
neglect them. . . . God made us as his perfect  
creation. He made no mistake when he made us black with  
kinky hair. It was Divine Purpose for us to live in our  
natural habitat - the tropical zones of the earth.  
Forget the white man's banter, that he made us in the  
night and forgot to paint us white.<sup>24</sup>

As Garvey lectured and travelled throughout the United States and observed the discrimination and poverty which Afro-Americans faced in the North and the South, he expanded his program into one which would deal with the problems of blackness not only at the psychological level, but also at the economic level.<sup>25</sup> In the depression of the post-war era, when blacks and whites found themselves in competition for a limited number of jobs, black workers were the first ones relegated to the ranks of the unemployed. Garvey thus saw the need for black workers to adjust to the climate of the times by building their own organizations for the protection of their economic interests. In other words, black people of necessity had to become self-reliant and not remain dependent upon white capital, which had already made it clear that black people would not receive fair treatment in the employment sector.<sup>26</sup>

In 1918, Garvey formed the Negro Factories Corporation marking his first concrete move towards an independent black economy. This was indeed a page from the philosophy of Booker T. Washington who had preached a doctrine of thrift and enterprise as the most important phase in racial uplift. Though Garvey was full of admiration for Washington as a leader, and acknowledged that the ideal upon which the UNIA was founded followed closely along the lines of Tuskegee principles, he also saw the need for a program which was wider in scope to accommodate the needs of black people in a 20th century setting for whom industrial education was no longer enough.

The world satisfied itself to believe that succeeding Negro leaders would follow absolutely the teachings of Washington. Unfortunatley the world is having a rude awakening, in that we are evolving a new ideal. The new ideal includes the program of Booker T. Washington

and has gone much further.

Things have changed wonderfully since Washington came on the scene. His vision was industrial opportunity for the Negro, but the Sage of Tuskegee has passed off the stage of life and left behind a new problem - a problem that must be solved, not by the industrial leader only, but by the political and military leaders as well.

The black man who had emerged in the immediate aftermath of World War I was militant and demanding, a sentiment which Garvey had to incorporate into his movement and give expression.

If Washington had lived he would have had to change his program. No leader can successfully lead this race of ours without giving an interpretation of the awakened spirit of the New Negro, who does not seek industrial opportunity alone, but a political voice. The world is amazed at the desire of the New Negro, for with his strong voice he is demanding a place in the affairs of men.

Without endorsing the accommodationism of Washington, Garvey approved of his economic arrangements since he saw it not only as a means of affirming independence, but also as a way of establishing collective pride amongst black people in their own achievements. To this end, the Negro Factories Corporation established shops, factories, laundrettes, financial institutions and restaurants owned and patronized by black people. The manufacture and sale of black dolls, was probably one of its most well known enterprises. Garvey saw the need to teach black pride to children at an early age since in an predominantly white society where 'whiteness' was given the stamp of approval and 'blackness' seen as the mark of shame, black children were indoctrinated with negative images of themselves. The preference of black children for white dolls was symptomatic of this hence, Garvey's attempt at reverse psychology. He encouraged mothers to buy black dolls for their children as the first step in teaching preference for their own physical characteristics.<sup>29</sup> The Negro World

carried advertisements to encourage this, forming part of Garvey's larger campaign to demonstrate that being black should not be seen as an offence but an honour.

To be a Negro is no disgrace, but an honor, and we of the Universal Negro Improvement Association do not want to become white. We do not seek for the whiteman's company more than he would seek after ours. We are proud and honorable. We love our race and respect and adore our mothers. We are as proud as our fathers were in the days of old, and even though we have passed through slavery in the Western world, we shall not hang down <sup>30</sup>our heads for Ethiopia shall again return to her Glory.

Garvey urged that now was the time for blacks to free themselves from thinking along the lines of white ideals and create a standard relevant to their own needs and experiences. Urging people to buy black dolls was one important way to teach black pride and Garvey admonished his followers to reinforce this in every other phase of their lives.

The time has come for the Negro to forget and cast behind him his hero worship and adoration of other races, and start out immediately to create and emulate heroes of his own. We must canonize our own saints, create our own martyrs, and elevate to positions of fame and honor black men and women who have made their distinct contributions to our racial history. <sup>31</sup>

As the Negro Factories Corporation gathered momentum, Garvey further expanded his program. The years 1918 to 1923 marked the height of his popularity in the United States and the period during which he branched out into many areas infusing everything with the concept of blackness. The Black Cross Nurses, the majority of whom did not have the rudiments of medical training, symbolized their willingness to come to the aid of black people; the Black Army and Generals were symbolic of the willingness to fight for all oppressed black people, and perhaps most notable of all, the Black Star Line,

the largest of Garvey's undertakings, which represented the willingness of black people to work collectively towards economic independence.<sup>32</sup>

The Black Star Line formed early in 1919, purchased ships and turned ownership and operation over to black people. Ordinary people were encouraged to become a part of the Black Star Line by purchasing shares and Garvey's objective was to link black people of all countries in a system of commercial development. Unfortunately, the Black Star Line did not prove to be a viable enterprise. Although it attracted the attention of the masses, many of whom had invested their savings, unsound business management coupled with the fact that Garvey had been sold vessels which were not sea-worthy contributed to its collapse in 1923. After the Black Star Line had folded, Garvey outlined his prescription for race development as a defence in court against the charge that he had misused public funds when he said, "We were not buying ships for ourselves but for the race. For what? For the industrial and commercial development of the race."<sup>33</sup> He went on to say that the Black Star Line had taught a valuable lesson in business acumen to black people who would not otherwise have had the chance,

The Universal Negro Improvement Association and the Black Star Line employs thousands of black girls and black boys. Girls who could only be washer women in your homes, we made clerks and stenographers of them in the Black Star Line's office. You will see that from the start we tried to dignify our race. If I am to be condemned for that I am satisfied.<sup>34</sup>

Through his economic endeavors, Garvey strove to teach black people that if they could accomplish something for and by themselves, they would no longer have reason to feel ashamed. The fact that white people believed themselves to be superior and were thought of as such, Garvey tried to show, was not by virtue of their whiteness,

but through their economic power which had become synonymous with whiteness. In the same way, Garvey taught that contempt for a black skin was a result of their subjugated status and not the intrinsic inferiority of black people.

Prejudice of the white race against the black race is not so much because of color as of condition; because as a race, to them, we have accomplished nothing; we have built no nation, no government; because we are dependent for our economic and political existence.<sup>55</sup>

Negative qualities, he preached were not inherent in blackness and need not be equated with it. If black people, through independent efforts would prove themselves to be a worthy race, they would not be seen by the world as black and inferior, but simply as men.

If black men throughout the world as a race will render themselves so independent and useful as to be sought out by other race groups it will simply mean that all the problems of race will be smashed to pieces and the Negro would be regarded like anybody else - a man to be respected and admired.<sup>56</sup>

In this sense, pride in blackness and economic nationalism were inextricably entwined in Garvey's philosophy. Economic independence, the liberation of Africa and the building of a nation could only be achieved through a process of rebuilding the pride of black people and in turn, their independent efforts would reinforce this pride.

If at times it appeared that Garvey was de-emphasizing the importance of colour, it is necessary to examine what he said within the context of his total philosophy. He minimized colour on the one hand to teach his followers that both blacks and whites were equal as far as the capacity for inventive genius was concerned, and that colour had nothing to do with intellect. On the other, to Garvey, the concept of colour was supremely important in that it was black

people who had no nation and were kept down, while whites were seen as superior. What Garvey tried to illustrate was that black people, instead of lamenting their blackness and striving to be white, should take pride in their colour since their desire to be white was an admission that they regarded themselves as unworthy. By pointing out under some circumstances that colour did not matter, Garvey was in fact saying that if blacks were as capable as whites, they should cultivate pride in this fact by building their own nation and economic enterprises, thus solving racial antagonism and problems of white superiority and black inferiority by standing on an equal footing with whites.

On the surface of things, Garvey appeared to be appealing to black people on the one hand to free themselves from an enslavement to white ideals, while at the same time, modelling the co-operative ventures of the UNIA on European and American economic structures. In criticizing Garvey, Wilson Jeremiah Moses concluded that the whole UNIA program was bourgeois and reactionary.<sup>37</sup> While it will not be contested that Garvey drew on elements of the western political experience, Moses's critique is misplaced in two respects. Firstly, Garvey's black capitalism must be seen as a reaction to his times; a reaction to European imperialism and colonialism, or, as Howard Samuels economic historian terms it, a 'compensatory capitalism' for black people to overcome a history of oppression by whites.<sup>38</sup> It seems that Moses does not fully appreciate Garvey's philosophy or understand his thinking or he would have seen that Garvey was not bourgeois in the sense that he was simply arguing that his race would be liberated when they had black masters in place of white ones. His



long range program of economic development and progress in Africa meant that blacks had to be free of any kind of oppression, including oppression by members of their own race.

any Negro who expects that he will be assisted here there or anywhere to exercise a haughty superiority over the fellows of his own race, makes a tremendous mistake. such men had better remain where they are and not attempt to become in any way interested in the higher development of Africa.

The Negro has had enough of the vaunted practice of race superiority as inflicted upon him by others, therefore he is not prepared to tolerate a similar assumption on the part of his own people.<sup>39</sup>

Secondly, whether or not Garvey's economic nationalism was reactionary depends ultimately on how the term is defined. If reactionary is taken to mean a resistance to change or even progress, then Garvey's solution, which may not have departed from traditional economic structures, was in no way less radical than an extreme left-wing solution which would have the existing political order overthrown. In the final analysis, if Garvey's program were to succeed, for black people at least, the creation of a black capitalist economy would represent a fundamental change in their lives.<sup>40</sup>

The practicality of Garvey's program is however another issue. How far could it have become an economic reality? Apparently Garvey was not aware of the difficulties he would have encountered in overcoming economic institutions with well established markets since in his writings at least, he never gave an economic analysis to support his conviction. In an economic system where black people owned but a small share of the national wealth, the creation of any enterprise would have been on shaky foundations since, not enough capital would have been forthcoming to make it viable. Garvey's

plans for the building of a black economy would have had to have taken into consideration the position of black people in the national economy of which they formed a part.

Rather than condemn Garvey out of hand on this count, it is important that we see him as he was, a thinker who possessed a real penchant for the resolution of immediate issues which he believed required a practical approach and not mere theorizing. Perhaps for this reason, Garvey neglected or ignored economic theory and concerned himself more with attacking and solving immediate problems. This is not to suggest that he did not reflect upon issues which went beyond the attainment of immediate goals, clearly he did, his thinking was farsighted in that he believed any scheme or enterprise he started immediately, bore direct relation to the eventual liberation of black people and Africa.

Garvey's doctrine of pride in blackness was also expressed in his ideas of cultural and historical nationalism as a means of instilling confidence in black people, and ultimately as tools of liberation. It is significant that during the early 1920's, Garvey's height of popularity in the United States, there emerged also a cultural re-awakening known as the Harlem Renaissance and while Garvey may not have directly initiated this movement, he certainly helped give it expression and impetus.

The Harlem Renaissance was a re-awakening in the sense that it did not originate in the 20th century but had its historical roots in the 19th century black nationalist tradition when George Washington Williams, Martin R. Delaney, W.E.B. Du Bois and even Booker T. Washington had all tried to engender a spirit of pride amongst their

people by teaching an appreciation for black culture through the medium of black literature. The renaissance, like black nationalist ideologies, came to full bloom in a period of discontent and racial conflict which had caused a deep crisis of identity among black people. Nationalist ideologies in the 19th century had always become more pronounced after serious setbacks when blacks were forced by circumstance to resort to their own devices. In this case, an emphasis upon black culture was seen as one way of combatting problems in a 20th century urban setting.

The creation of large compact black communities, and the harsh realities of the ghetto demonstrated to blacks with brutal clarity that poverty and unemployment were facts of life for them in the North as well as the South. A number of articles, books and poems by black authors attempted to explain the black man's place in this context, stressing race, achievement and black pride to provide blacks with a feeling of dignity in the face of social and economic adversity. Alain Locke, professor at Howard University and acknowledged as the leading interpreter of the renaissance, compiled a collection of works by the prominent literary figures of the period into an anthology entitled The New Negro which was replete with themes of black pride, the glories of the African past and the importance of black culture; themes Marcus Garvey had articulated through the pages of the Negro World from the beginning of his career in the United States.

Garvey had contacts with J.A. Rogers and Arthur A. Schomburg who were both well known renaissance writers and on occasions lectured to UNIA audiences in Harlem on the necessity and importance of black

history. In addition, many other renaissance writers are reputed to have had direct connections with Garvey and his movement.<sup>42</sup> The importance of Garvey's ideas however, to the renaissance lay in the fact that he stressed the role of culture in meeting the problems of black identity in a way that literary figures could not. Garvey, after all, was the one who commanded the attention of the masses by speaking to them in bold uncomplicated terms. His message to them was clear and direct, black was beautiful and black people had a glorious history of which they had been robbed by white historians who distorted the truth in order to convince them that they had never and could never amount to anything. He urged that now was the time for black people to cease fawning before whites; it was time for them to liberate themselves from self-hatred by creating their own history.

But, when we come to consider the history of man, was not the Negro a power, was he not great once? Yes, honest students of history can recall the day when Egypt, Ethiopia and Timbuctoo towered in their civilizations, towered above Europe, . . . . Africa was peopled with a race of cultured black men, who were masters in art, science and literature; men who were cultured and refined. . . . Why then should we lose hope? Black men you were once great; you shall be great again. Lose not courage, lose not faith, go forward.<sup>43</sup>

Garvey's interest in black history and culture did not stop at the imparting of black pride. Although a significant stride, pride in blackness for Garvey was not enough by itself. It was a means of establishing confidence in his people to realize his larger objective and that was motivation towards their emancipation as a race. Essentially, Garvey was saying that black people had a noble history, and had no reason to feel ashamed of themselves. He urged them to build upon their past, "Be as proud of your race today as our fathers were

in the days of yore. We have a beautiful history, and we shall create another in the future that will astonish the world."<sup>44</sup>

Black history, an appreciation for black culture, and the creation of economic enterprises, were the tools employed by Garvey in furtherance of his program for eventual race emancipation. Continually searching for new ways to expand and make manifest his ideas, Garvey marshalled all the evidence he could to prove that a black skin did not signify inferiority.

His doctrine of black pride was perhaps given the most obvious expression in the creation of a religion with black instead of white symbolism. For Garvey, white denominations were too infested with subtle and overt forms of racism to be of any service to black people, and praying to an alien white God only served to reinforce their contempt for their blackness. If black people were ever to have pride in themselves Garvey argued, they must cease worshipping white Gods, and turn their religious fervour to a God made in their image and likeness.<sup>45</sup>

In 1920, Garvey formed the African Orthodox Church in New York whose role was to function as a subsidiary agency for the UNIA by appealing to the religious sentiments of black people. The most influential figure in the AOC was George Alexandar McGuire who was a native West Indian like Garvey, but from the island of Antigua. Before joining the Garvey movement, McGuire had worked for the Episcopal Church in New York, but discouraged by white racism, he joined the UNIA in 1920, and was appointed Chaplain general of the AOC by Garvey in September 1921. Garvey never declared Christianity to be the official creed of the AOC for fear of alienating black

people who were non Christians. Rather, it appealed to Jews, Muslims, and those of other religious sects and cults, seeking to unite them on the basis of a black theology. The AOC proved to be fairly popular, and had twenty-one congregations spread throughout the United States and Canada, and reaching as far as Trinidad, Cuba and Haiti.<sup>46</sup>

In order to stimulate pride in blackness, Garvey saw the need to invert the black man's religious concepts. He was not the first leader to articulate this idea, Bishop Henry Turner had projected the notion of a black God long before Garvey set foot on the shores of America, and had worked within an all black church. Nevertheless, Garvey popularized the idea of a black religion far more successfully than Turner and used it to destroy the racist assumption that only white people had the true religion and were made in God's image. While Garvey conceded that in reality God being a spirit could have no colour, he argued that just as white men depicted God as white, then so too, black people should liberate their minds from white concepts and visualize God in their own image. In this way, Garvey taught his followers to think positively black.

If the white man has the idea of a white God, let him worship his God as he desires; If the yellow man's God is of his race let him worship his God as he sees fit. We, as Negroes, have found a new ideal. Whilst our God has no color, yet it is human to see everything through one's own spectacles, and since the white people have seen their God through white spectacles, we have only now started out (late though it be) to see our God through our spectacles.<sup>47</sup>

At a religious ceremony in 1924 which formed part of the International Convention of Negro Peoples of the World, and took place in New York, this sentiment received its fullest expression.

Christ was depicted as a 'Black Man of Sorrows,' and the Virgin Mary as a 'Black Madonna.'<sup>48</sup> Garvey speaking to the audience declared,

Our people have been lynched and burned in the South because we have been worshipping a false god. But what can you expect when we have adopted the idolism of another race? We must create a god of our own and give this new religion to the Negroes of the world.<sup>49</sup>

The religious aspect of the convention centered around the question of blackness and whiteness. Garvey further contended that if black people arrived in heaven and found themselves confronted with a white God, he would either have to be changed for a black one, or Jim Crowism would exist in heaven.<sup>50</sup> Bishop McGuire speaking at the same convention, underlined Garvey's ideas and was particularly vocal on the need to cease equating blackness with evil,

If the white man is going to impress on the children of my race that everything good is white, and that everything that is of the devil is black, then let us here at this convention rewrite theology.<sup>51</sup>

In another context, no doubt reflecting on patterns of social and residential segregation, McGuire declared, "If the Man of Sorrows lived today in Dixie with his pedigree known as it is, the color line would be drawn against him."<sup>52</sup>

Yet it must be remembered that Garvey's interest in religion was primarily, although by no means exclusively, a political strategy, invoked to give his followers a respect for their blackness so that they might take the necessary steps to change the circumstances which governed their lives not only in the ever after, but in the here and now. It was never Garvey's intention that black people should become satisfied with the prospect of finding their just

rewards in heaven, or indulge in a black religion merely for its own sake. Rather, it was an effort to lift up the image of blacks by representing them as part of their creator.

Garvey's emphasis on the worship of a black God, black Christ, and Black Madonna was not simply a matter of changing external physical characteristics while ignoring the very essence of a religious experience. To the extent that the Christian doctrine occupied a central place in the religious creed of the AOC, Garvey could be subject to the charge that his religion was merely an inversion of the prevailing white expression in the same way that his economic endeavours embodied manifestations of white capitalism.<sup>53</sup> To do so however would be to pervert the meaning of religion and expose how little is understood of Garvey's constructive and well-thought out approach to the problems of black identity. One needs to transcend the external religious tenets and look at the way the ethos of the religion not only reflected the unique cultural experiences of black people, but also, the way in which it addressed their problems. Religion in the Garvey movement was intended to be a collective experience for black people to demonstrate their common identity and interests in the struggle for survival and power in a hostile white world.

Whether the AOC was a formal denomination with a unique doctrine is not of fundamental importance to an understanding of Garveyism. What is important is the attitude behind it. Its unique quality lay in the revolt against a western religious experience which was out of touch with the needs of black people and taught them, whether by accident or design, to hate themselves. It is necessary to see clearly that the basis of religion for Garvey was black oppression.



This was the foundation upon which a black theology was built and at the very core, whether modelled on a Christian doctrine or not, the black experience and not the white experience determined the essence of the AOC activity and represented an attempt to think positively about the meaning of blackness.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, it does no more justice to Garvey's all black religion to see it merely as an opiate of the masses to keep them "content." Only if Garvey is examined superficially can it be concluded that his religion was another step in implementing bourgeois and reactionary values. A more critical analysis illustrates that Garvey's conception of religion added a progressive dimension to his movement in pursuit of his ultimate goal, black liberation. Black theology was essentially one of his many means of giving direction to the whole UNIA program, and uniting black people in the building of a nation.

Despite Garvey's good intentions, the AOC and the concept of a black God was looked upon with great disfavour by a sizeable group of race leaders. Kelly Miller of the NAACP regarded Garvey's religious undertakings as outright blasphemy and commenting on them in 1927, after Garvey's deportation from the United States he contended,

Mr Garvey took up the apotheosis of blackness as offset to the existing deification of whiteness. He would have God painted black. This caused a violent revulsion of feeling on part even of black men who had become habituated to bow down and worship at the shrine of a color alien to their own. . . . They simply held up their hands in frantic disgust at such revolting blasphemy.<sup>55</sup>

Although in disagreement on religious issues, this was not the major point of controversy between Garvey and the NAACP, nor was Kelly Miller the only NAACP member to denounce Garvey's activities. As early as 1922, Garvey and W.E.B. Du Bois waged a

campaign through the Negro World and The Crisis, each attempting to discredit the other. Though they remained hostile to each other during Garvey's hey-day in the United States, surprisingly, their relationship did not start off on this footing. Du Bois recalls in his autobiography that he had heard of Garvey in 1915, while he was vacationing in Jamaica. The islanders had heard of Du Bois's efforts in the field of race relations and received him warmly, a welcome in which Garvey and the UNIA, still in its infancy joined.<sup>56</sup> By the time Garvey had arrived in the United States, his and Du Bois's ideas were becoming increasingly polarized. Garvey began institutionalizing his philosophy of pride in blackness, giving it tangible expression in the form of economic and religious schemes, taking it to its logical conclusion by prohibiting white membership in his organization. Here lay the grain of their contention. The NAACP was an inter-racial civil rights organization that had been formed through the efforts of liberals and socialists in conjunction with those who Garvey accused as being the lightest members of the black elite. Du Bois and Walter White, the two most prominent NAACP officials were both light in complexion, Mary White Ovington, one of the NAACP's founders, was a white woman, and Oswald Garrison Villard, an executive member of the NAACP during Garvey's period in the United States was a white man.<sup>57</sup> The three notable black NAACP lawyers were, Charles Houston, William Hastie, and James Cobb, but they were far outnumbered by the white attorneys who fought most of the cases in the courts. They included, Morefield Storey, Louis Marshall, Clarence Darrow, Charles A. Studin, Arthur Garfield Hays, Arthur B. Spingarn and Moses Ernst.<sup>58</sup> Although writer James Weldon Johnson, and William Pickens, one time

contributor to the Negro World joined the executive ranks of the NAACP in the 1920's, and as Garvey said, were probably the only ones "that could be distinguished as Negro,"<sup>59</sup> their addition did not change the racial composition of the NAACP which was predominantly white.

The principles of Garvey and those of the NAACP parted company on the question of black and white co-operation since Garvey believed that the solution to the problems of black identity lay with black people, not handouts from white philanthropists.

For us to examine ourselves thoroughly as a people we will find that we have more traitors than leaders, because nearly everyone who essays to lead the race at this time does so by first establishing himself as the pet of some philanthropist of another race, to whom he will go and debase his race in the worst form, humiliate his own manhood, and thereby win the sympathy of the "great benefactor," who will dictate to him what he should do in the leadership of the Negro race.<sup>60</sup>

Garvey took the position that white people or their organizations could not fully understand the psychology of the black masses, nor articulate their sufferings and frustrations and even if they could, racism was so pervasive that the solution could never be found in black and white co-operation.

Prejudice we shall always have between black and white, so long as the latter believes that the former is intruding upon their rights. So long as white laborers believe that black laborers are taking and holding their jobs . . . so long as white political leaders and statesmen believe that black politicians and statesmen are seeking the same positions in the nation's government; so long as white men believe that black men want to associate with, and marry white-women, then we will ever have prejudice, and not only prejudice, but riots, lynchings, burnings and God to tell what next will follow.<sup>61</sup>

Rather, Garvey urged blacks to take pride in themselves through the establishment and running of their own organizations from which they

would ultimately reap the fruits of their own self-sacrifice and thus emerge with a positive image of themselves as black people.

Not only did Garvey and members of the NAACP differ over the question of black and white unity, but they also delivered powerful invective against one another over the question of attitudes toward light-skinned people. Garvey argued that he saw among whites in the United States and elsewhere, a preference for light skinned employees, and the makings of a colour caste system whereby black people assessed themselves on how near they approached whiteness. Summing up this situation he contended,

Some of us in America, the West Indies and Africa believe that the nearer we approach the white man in color the greater our social standing and privilege and that we should build up an "aristocracy" based upon caste of color and not achievement in race. It is well known, although no one is honest enough to admit it, that we have been for the past thirty years at least, but more so now than ever, grading ourselves for social honor and distinction on the basis of color. . . . to the damaging extent that the whole world has made us its laughing stock.<sup>62</sup>

Growing up under a triple-tier race and color system in Jamaica and his conflict with the light-skinned element who had frustrated his efforts to build a black organization there, no doubt influenced Garvey's attitude to people of lighter hue. However, when he imported this concept to the United States along with his UNIA, Du Bois argued that it had no relevance because Garvey did not understand the American system of race relations,

Garvey has sought to import to America and capitalize the antagonism between blacks and mulattoes in the West Indies. . . . Garvey imports it into a land where it has never had any substantial footing and where today, of all days, it is absolutely repudiated by every thinking Negro; . . .<sup>63</sup>

Despite the contention of Du Bois to the contrary, Garvey's

argument acquired substance when he was attacked by light-skinned leaders, including Du Bois on just this characteristic - skin colour.) Robert Bagnall of the NAACP, made it quite clear that he saw no virtue in full-blooded blackness when he gave a typical racist caricature of Garvey, describing him as, "of unmixed stock, stocky, fat sleek, with protruding jaws and heavy jowls, small bright, pig-like eyes and a rather bull-dog like face."<sup>64</sup> Similarly, Du Bois illustrated his contempt for Garvey's blackness and perhaps his own when he described him as, "a little fat/black man, ugly but with intelligent eyes and a big head."<sup>65</sup>

Garvey denounced such people, in particular Du Bois, since he saw in these statements an admission of their shame in their blackness. Black people Garvey argued, were for the first time being taught to see beauty in themselves, but the propaganda of skin-bleaching and hair-straightening had left an indelible mark on some unfortunate "coloured" leaders, who still equated whiteness with superiority. Turning Du Bois's statements around, Garvey used them as ammunition against him, first to show their absurdity, and secondly, to illustrate Du Bois's contempt for blackness.

In describing Marcus Garvey . . . he referred to him as "a little, fat black man; ugly, but with intelligent eyes and a big head." Now, what does Du Bois mean by ugly? This so-called professor of Harvard and Berlin ought to know by now that the standard of beauty within a race is not arrived at by comparison with another race.<sup>66</sup>

Garvey went on to add,

this only goes to show how much hate Du Bois has for the black blood in his veins. Anything that is black to him, is ugly, is hideous, is monstrous, and this is why in 1917 he had but the lightest of colored people in his office, when one could hardly tell whether it was a white ghoul or a colored vaudeville he was running at Fifth Avenue.

Garvey's doctrine of black pride and the fostering of a positive black identity, ultimately led him to consider race-mixing an evil; a crime against nature and divine laws that should not be perpetuated. He believed that when God created the different races and caused them to diverge on a variety of physical characteristics, his plan was that each should live separately in its natural habitat. Had God intended the races to inter-breed, Garvey argued, he would not have made them distinct. At the same time, Garvey was aware that the slave regime had given rise to the emergence of a hybrid class and that a 'pure' black race, or any race for that matter, could never be achieved. Nevertheless, he resolutely contended that further miscegenation should be stopped to prevent any more watering down of the races.<sup>68</sup> This was the threat that Garvey perceived in the efforts of the NAACP and its agitation for civil rights. Social and political equality in Garvey's eyes ultimately meant the right to inter-marry and inter-breed. Employing a subtle play on words, Garvey pointed out that the NAACP, by its own admission was not working to advance the interests of black people but sought only to protect those of light complexion, i.e. the 'coloureds.' This he believed was in opposition to his campaign on behalf of black pride. He was trying to teach pride in blackness not worship for a light skin and at the same time, he sought to expose and tear down the systems in the United States, Jamaica, and Africa which he argued, awarded social status on the basis of a light skin, rather than merit, leaving the bottom of the social hierarchy for those of dark complexion.

Garvey believed that artificial distinctions based on lightness or darkness of complexion, strengthened divisions among black people.

The only way he could overcome this obstacle was to glorify blackness and teach that it was a virtue so that instead of perpetuating colour distinctions, black people of all shades would realize that they were black people and not pale imitations of the white man. Only with a common pride in their blackness, would Garvey's task of forming a solid front become feasible. As it stood, Garvey believed that members of the race were loathe to see themselves as black, and were forever grading themselves on how near they conformed to whiteness. On this point, Garvey attacked Du Bois and the NAACP,

Du Bois represents a group that hates the Negro blood in its veins, and has been working subtly to build up a caste aristocracy that would socially divide the race into two groups: One the superior because of color caste, and the other the inferior, hence the pretentious work of the National Association for the Advancement of "Colored" People. . . . When Garvey arrived in America and visited the office of the National Association for the Advancement of "Colored" People to interview Du Bois, who was regarded as a leader of the Negro people, and who had recently visited the West Indies, he was dumfounded on approach. . . . The whole staff was either white or very near white, and thus Garvey got his first shock of the advancement hypocrisy.<sup>69</sup>

The whole ideology underpinning the NAACP was distasteful to Garvey, but when his ideas were still in an embryonic phase, he might have welcomed Du Bois and applauded his methods since initially, Garvey sought solutions to the problems faced by West Indians through established political channels, as did the NAACP. For example, there was Garvey's petition to the British Consul in Costa Rica, and the Government in Jamaica, protesting that steps be taken to improve the working conditions for black people. In addition, in his early years, Garvey, like the NAACP members whom he later criticized was not averse to receiving support from whites to help build his organizations. He stated in his autobiography that he received assistance and encouragement

from the Colonial Secretary of Jamaica, the Governor, and many other prominent whites. Experience, changed his focus, and he became committed to the belief that blacks and whites could never live together in harmony since their interests were diametrically opposed. Competition for employment in the war years and the exploitation of black workers in Africa, the West Indies and South and Central America, taught him that the interests of whites, necessitated the subjugation of blacks. Thus, Garvey approached the race relations issue from an opposite direction to that of the NAACP. He insisted on the necessity of black pride as a means of instilling confidence in self, urging that black people must never, even under the extremes of pressure feel contempt for themselves.<sup>70</sup> The ethos of his movement was built around black pride as a motivating force, designed to give blacks the confidence needed to direct their own destinies. Ultimately, he hoped to utilize this positive spirit to create an independent African nation, and bring about the liberation of the race everywhere.<sup>71</sup>

Garvey saw the interests of black and white people as being separated by a vast impassible gulf and believed firmly that the two could never co-exist in one nation. Thus he contended,

that is why we are advising American and West Indian Negroes to look forward to the building up of a country of their own, a nation of their own, because all over the world there is an emphatic line of demarcation drawn between the interests of black and white people industrially, socially and politically.<sup>72</sup>

The only solution to this problem in Garvey's eyes was not gradual assimilation into white societies, but the creation of an independent black nation which would be won through the efforts of blacks on every continent. He believed that each race had its own



clearly defined territory and Africa for black people was the end he worked towards,

If Europe is for the white man, if Asia is for the brown and yellow men, then surely Africa is for the black man. The great white man has fought for the preservation of Europe, the great yellow and brown races are fighting for the preservation of Asia, and four hundred million Negroes shall shed, if needs be, the last drop of their blood for the redemption of Africa and the emancipation of the race everywhere.

What Garvey saw in Du Bois's program and that of other black intellectuals, was a subversion of his aims; a thwarting of his attempts to create a base in Africa. The logical conclusion of the NAACP's program, Garvey summed up in a critique of Du Bois's aims and methods:

In what direction must we expect his advancement? We can conclude in no other way than it is in the direction of losing our black identity and becoming, as nearly as possible, the lowest whites by assimilation and miscegenation.

Directing his criticism against the NAACP which he saw as out to sabotage his aims, Garvey stated,

Some Negro leaders have advanced the belief that in another few years the white population will make up their minds to assimilate their black populations; thereby sinking all racial prejudice in the welcoming of the black race into the social companionship of the white. Such leaders further believe that by the amalgamation of black and white, a new type will spring up, and that type will become the American and West Indian of the future.

This belief is preposterous. I believe that white men should be white, yellow men should be yellow, and black men should be black in the great panorama of races, . . .

He believed that the NAACP's program gave black people a one way ticket leading nowhere and reflecting on the war experience, Garvey saw a trend which convinced him that until blacks and whites ceased to be competitors in the same country for a limited number of resources, racial prejudice and tension would always exist.

This line of reasoning brought Garvey into a further and more serious conflict with the NAACP when he recognized the aims of the Ku Klux Klan, The Anglo-Saxon Club of America, and other exclusively white organizations. The 1920's saw a revival of the Klan's activities, especially in the North as a result of the migration of black southerners who placed a strain on job and housing opportunities. While Garvey denounced the Klan for lynchings and violence against blacks, what he also saw in its program was an ideology similar to that of his own movement, only in reverse. He was able to identify with the Klan rather than communists and socialists since he felt the latter were merely using the black man as a pawn in the advancement of their own class interests, to be dispensed with once they had achieved their aims. The Klan, however, in Garvey's thinking, were appealing to the spirit of whiteness and white purity in the same way that he and the UNIA appealed to the spirit of blackness and black pride. The Klan intended to keep America for the white man and by the same token, Garvey intended to have Africa for the black man.<sup>76</sup>

In 1922, Garvey was invited to Atlanta by Edward Young Clarke, acting head of the Ku Klux Klan who had expressed a desire to meet and talk with Garvey on the objectives of both organizations. Garvey later stated,

Between the Ku Klux Klan and the . . . National Association for the Advancement of "Colored" People group, give me the Klan for their honesty of purpose towards the Negro. They are better friends to my race for telling us what they are, and what they mean, thereby giving us a chance to stir for ourselves, . . . I regard the Klan, the Anglo-Saxon clubs and White American societies, as far as the Negro is concerned, as better friends of the race than all groups of hypocritical whites put together.<sup>77</sup>

Whereas Garvey saw the Ku Klux Klan and the UNIA as complementary in their efforts on behalf of white and black pride respectively, and in their repudiation of inter-breeding, the NAACP did not. The fact that Garvey and the NAACP differed over the question of tactics and ideology gave rise to enough conflict, but the final blow came from Garvey's meeting with and endorsement of the Klan's policy. Whereas Garvey saw his move as a step toward black pride and eventual liberation, the NAACP saw it as an invitation to racism and came out in protest from the midst of which Du Bois declared, "Marcus Garvey is without doubt the most dangerous enemy of the Negro race in America and in the world. He is either a lunatic or a traitor."<sup>78</sup>

The whole debate between Garvey and Du Bois, although centered around the question of colour, was also tinged with hidden class implications.<sup>79</sup> For Du Bois, the position of blacks in the United States represented a combination of race and class oppression although he must have realized, if his NAACP activity is any testimony, that blacks were victims of a more severe oppression since their colour marked them off as easy targets for discriminatory treatment. For Garvey, the concept of class had been subordinated to race, and obscured by white racism. The majority of blacks were victims of oppression whereas, the majority of whites were not. This is precisely where Garvey and Du Bois stood in opposition to each other, the primacy of race or class.

Garvey's experiences led him to believe that a class analysis clouded the issue of race oppression which far outweighed oppression based on class. In thinking this, Garvey felt that he was quite justified and more perceptive than Du Bois, given that practically

all black people in the world were subject to imperialist and colonial oppression.<sup>80</sup> Logically this led Garvey to think in terms of black self-determination rather than class, since black people as a distinct ethnic group had a peculiar experience of oppression as a race. Thus, one can understand Garvey's demand for the right of black people to solve their problems by themselves, on their own terms, and without interference from whites who were not victims of systematic exploitation based on race or colour.

Du Bois's reaction to Garvey's meeting with the KKK illuminates the nature of the controversy between the primacy of race or class even further. Du Bois obviously saw extreme right wing groups as an enemy of black people, and the fact that he chose to work with white socialists and liberals to advance the interests of blacks in America, indicates that in his thought the interests of black people were toward the middle and left of the political spectrum. Thus, it was inevitable that Du Bois would mis-interpret the meaning of Garvey's meeting with the Klan. Within Du Bois's analysis of the situation, it was an invitation for blacks and whites to participate in right wing racism, and a betrayal of their political and class interests. Looking from Garvey's ideological standpoint, his rejection of such a view led him to see the NAACP as a form of paternalism, and left wing political agitation, supposedly including black people as outright dishonesty. Garvey was skeptical of white organizations of a liberal and more militant nature since he saw nothing in the history of black and white relations to persuade him to the contrary, and it seems that Du Bois was unable to appreciate this element in Garvey's thought.<sup>81</sup> Garvey showed clearly his understanding of the

sources of black degradation by repudiating the concept of class, and talked with the Klan because he believed that the two interests could act as a catalyst in speeding up the process of separation. Whatever racist reasons the Klan might have had, the reason Garvey urged separation was that black people had never, and could never feel decent and equal among whites.

About the same time that the NAACP and the UNIA were engaged in a heated debate, Garvey's Black Star Line found itself in severe financial difficulties. Encouraged by Garvey's opponents - including the NAACP, the Federal Government investigated the company's affairs and brought Garvey to trial. He was convicted and sentenced to five years in the Atlanta Penitentiary on a charge of defrauding U.S. citizens through the mails.<sup>83</sup>

While in prison, Garvey still strove to ensure that his doctrine reached the masses, and his movement continued with the same vitality. From behind bars, his denunciation of the NAACP remained powerful, as did his appeal to black people of all shades and complexions to unite. From the date of his entry into the United States, to the time of his deportation, Garvey continually embraced his doctrine of black pride and stated emphatically that prison would not subdue him in his efforts until he had realized his dream.

I repeat that if they think they can stamp out the souls of 400,000,000 black men, they make a tremendous and terrible mistake. We are no longer dogs; we are no longer peons; we are no longer serfs - we are men . . . the spirit that activates 6,000,000 black men who are at the present time members of the Universal Negro Improvement Association; it is the spirit that will activate 400,000,000 Negroes in the redemption of their motherland Africa.<sup>84</sup>

From the building up of a movement centered around the philosophy

of black pride through the pages of the Negro World, speeches from his platform at Liberty Hall, a black religion and the creation of a black economy, Garvey's decade in the United States, was also the period of his greatest success.

Garvey had entered the United States at a time of uncertainty, a time when black people were suffering from the exploitative methods of farm tenancy and disillusionment when they discovered that the North did not offer them the new freedom it had promised. While blacks had escaped the problems of rural life by fleeing from the South, they discovered that life in an urban context brought with it its peculiar brand of problems. It was this sense of disenchantment that Garvey was able to capitalize on, filtering the discontent of black people into constructive channels by urging them to believe that their colour did not signify inferiority as their conditions seemed to testify.

Garvey geared his movement to the historical and current experiences of black people who had been told they were inferior and as a result, had lost confidence in themselves and in their ability to create and develop a civilization and nation of their own. To overcome this lack of confidence, Garvey strove to give black people a new set of values based on black pride. He discerned that a black skin to the majority of black people meant shame, destitution and poverty because as a race, they had made no significant achievements. In the past, black people had had a great civilization, but one could not live in the past. They were in the present and everywhere Garvey looked, they were at the beck and call of white people, dependent on them for their social and economic well-being, in sum, their very existence.

Garvey's long term vision saw the creation of a powerful independent

African nation that would command the respect of the world, but his immediate concern was with the means of attaining this ultimate goal.

If black people lacked confidence and self-respect, then they were defeated before they had begun. With self-respect and confidence, Garvey believed that their battle could easily be won. Always with the vision of Africa in his mind, Garvey first dealt with the problems of black identity at the theoretical and psychological level through the pages of the Negro World and on speaking tours throughout the United States. His campaign on behalf of black pride began with a concerted effort directed towards the emancipation of the race from white concepts and ideals. Thinking in terms of whiteness Garvey contended was not only illogical, but also served to reinforce feelings of inadequacy among black people. He attempted to demonstrate at the theoretical and practical level that blackness was the only logical frame of reference for black people as whiteness was for white people. He argued that the only reason blacks graded themselves on the standard of whiteness was because these ideals had been foisted upon them by the dominant culture in religion, literature, history and economic and social life. Garvey consequently taught his followers that their liberation program would of necessity be built around the question of black affirmation.

In numerous ways, Garvey tried to point out the reasonableness of his ideas. White people had built up an economic system which exploited black labour and kept it confined to the lowest rungs of the occupational ladder, that is when they were able to get jobs at all. The concomitant poverty and social misery could only convince them that what white people said about them was true, that as a race, blacks

were inferior. Garvey urged that rather than complain and agitate, blacks should take pride in asserting their independence, identify positively with other members of the race and create an independent black economy that they could take pride in. Not only did Garvey articulate this idea, but he carried it from the theoretical level to the practical. If his race was to take pride in its blackness, the worship of colour alone was not enough. Pride in blackness needed tangible expression, something concrete that could be pointed to as evidence of the intrinsic worth of black people. To this end, Garvey directed his energies and the energies of his followers into the Negro Factories Corporation, the Black Star Line, and the African Orthodox Church.

Within the framework of black pride, whatever the limitations of Garvey's approach, the building of the UNIA marked a concerted effort to direct the attention of black people towards themselves as a political force. The hope was that as a race, they would be confident of their abilities to liberate themselves and Africa. In the final analysis, whatever criticisms can be made of Garvey's love for parades, pageantry, and his conformity to elements in the white power structure, what is important to a complete understanding of Garvey is that he adapted components of the western tradition to a unique set of experiences. Weaving them together with the theory and practice of the UNIA, he brought to his followers for the first time, a real feeling of virtue in blackness.



## Footnotes for Chapter Two

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## CHAPTER THREE

GARVEY AND HIS LAST YEARS:  
DECLINING YEARS OF THE UNIA

We believe all men entitled to common human respect, and that our race should in no way tolerate any insults that may be interpreted to mean disrespect to our color.

-UNIA Declaration of Rights, 1920.<sup>1</sup>

In November 1927, after serving just over two years of what was supposed to be a five year prison term, Garvey successfully appealed to the United States government, and had his sentence terminated by President Coolidge. A deportation order was served simultaneously on the grounds that Garvey was an undesirable alien, forcing him to leave the United States. Although he petitioned the government and protested on many occasions, he was never again allowed to enter the United States.

Returning to Jamaica, Garvey continued in his role as UNIA leader, and after a brief visit to London and France to mobilize further support for the UNIA from their black populations, he opened new chapters in the capital cities of both countries. At the same time Garvey was expanding these chapters, dissension occurred within the movement when he announced his intention to move the UNIA headquarters to Jamaica and direct the affairs of the organization from there. This brought an outcry from the New York officials who contended that the headquarters should remain in New York which was by far the largest chapter and the source of lucrative financial backing. Garvey refused and his stand resulted in the withdrawal of the American delegates from the UNIA confederation in August 1928, while still

claiming the title UNIA.<sup>2</sup> Fortunately for Garvey, the chapters in other parts of the United States, on other islands in the West Indies, in parts of South and Central America and Africa, did not follow suit, and his movement held together. The loss of support from New York however, hindered the UNIA financially and Garvey was never again able to attempt anything on a scale anywhere near comparable to his previous efforts.

Rather than lament his loss, Garvey strove to keep his movement and the spirit of black pride alive. To distinguish his organization from the New York section, he re-styled his Jamaican chapter, "The Parent Body of The Universal Negro Improvement Association." Although the Jamaican UNIA branch had been thriving during the time that Garvey was absent, working in the United States, it had never commanded a significant following (the main reason he had felt compelled to leave in the first place). As circumstances forced his return, he mustered all his energy to re-build it. Working in a different social and political context, Garvey realized, required a change in tactics to bring about his desired end. His new strategy involved entrance into mainstream politics in order to win the support of the black masses by doing something positive for them. Thus, he formed the Peoples Political Party in 1929, a subsidiary of the UNIA and campaigned for political office in the election of 1930.<sup>3</sup> But it was never his intention to overshadow the main object of the UNIA by political activity. Entrance into politics for Garvey was more of a temporary respite rather than a fundamental change in philosophy. He saw the need for immediate changes and believed that appointment to political office would be the best method for achieving them.

Amy Jacques Garvey who returned to Jamaica to be with her husband shortly after his deportation said that on arriving home, and seeing once again the conditions under which the black masses lived, Garvey felt compelled to push for immediate reforms. Unemployment and poverty were serious problems; the trades, businesses and concomitant wealth were in the hands of the Chinese, Syrians, Lebanese and whites, while black people who formed the majority of the population, had no stake in society. There was no educational system for the masses to speak of except for elementary schools which ended when students were eleven years of age. In the poor rural areas, high school education was virtually non-existent. The secondary schools in existence were concentrated in Kingston, and the wealthy parishes of St. Andrew which meant that children from rural areas who wished to attend high school had to be boarded out, a luxury which neither they, nor their parents could afford. Higher education was even more a prerogative of the rich; there were no polytechnics or universities in existence therefore, those who sought a higher education leading to a degree, needed the necessary funds to leave the island and pay for tuition abroad.<sup>4</sup>

Such was the situation which in Garvey's mind produced the need for an urgent solution, and at the level of local politics, his focus and emphasis was upon black people of the island. He stated in his campaign speech that although he held no animosity towards whites, black people were the object of his zeal because they were the ones who were kept down, and as a black man himself, their interests were of prime importance to him.



My opponents say I am against white and fair-skinned people. This is not so. I am against the class system here, which keeps the poor man down; and the poor are mostly black. It is only natural therefore, that their interests should be nearest and dearest to my heart.

If I were a white man I would have the interest of white people at heart; if I were a Chinese, it would be natural that I would make as much money as I could and send some of it to my people in China. If I were a Syrian, I would sell my cloth and goods at as high a price as I could get for it, and help my people in Syria and Lebanon. But as a man who fears the wrath of Almighty God, and loves all humanity, I say let us all join together as fellow Jamaicans and ring in the changes for a new Jamaica.

Garvey's tactic failed to produce the desired result. He lost the election on 1930 for reasons which are unclear. Garvey stated that a black politician named Theophilus Wint had stirred up opposition to him by criticizing the UNIA and its program as an insult to Jamaicans with the intention of leading them back to Africa to live amongst savages in the jungle. In reply to this racist stereotype and caricature of fellow members of the black race, Garvey hotly contended,

Theophilus Wint - a black man - has spoken of Africans as "savages" in a "dark land." But little does he know that Garvey has given light and hope to millions there, who are determined to restore it to its ancient glory. A day will come when Wint and his children will be glad to go to Africa.

While working on the political scene, Garvey was at the same time, struggling to expand the Jamaican headquarters of his UNIA and attract more followers. But he found himself opposed at every step by the colour question. The three tier colour caste system was still firmly implanted in the minds and lives of dark and light-skinned Jamaicans who were striving to be white and for this reason, Garvey realized, they were unable to identify with a race organization that espoused a philosophy of black pride and black liberation.<sup>7</sup>

The Negro World continued in its capacity as the UNIA propaganda

device while Garvey was experimenting in politics and after his defeat, Garvey began publication of another newspaper entitled, The Blackman in 1931 which, through a lack of financial support, went out of circulation the following year. It was quickly succeeded by the publication of the New Jamaican, but like its predecessor, it was short-lived and went out of publication in 1933. This was in many ways an indication of Garvey's demise as a race leader and the effect of a world-wide depression. After the controversy over the headquarters which coincided with the stock-market crash, there were two rival UNIA's appealing for financial support in the midst of a serious economic depression that prevented members from contributing in the way they had during the comparative prosperity of the 1920's. The effect of the depression also caused the Negro World to cease publication in 1933.

Refusing to accept financial defeat, Garvey continued his appeal to his Jamaican associates and world-wide audience and came up with the necessary funds to begin publication of his most important journal in this period, The Blackman which began in 1933, changing its title to The Black Man in 1935. Throughout the 1930's, it is significant that Garvey always seemed to be announcing new starts and additions to his program that never seemed to materialize. He appealed on numerous occasions for funds to turn The Blackman and The Black Man into a weekly magazine but was never successful, and in fact, was unable to muster up the support for his journal to be published on a monthly basis which had been his first intention. Over a period of five and a half years, only 24 issues were ever published.<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, despite weak financial support, one important "new start"

was Garvey's change in approach. He still held to his belief in black pride as the essential prerequisite of black liberation and the founding of an independent African nation, but whereas he had formerly mixed his ideas with propaganda and powerful invectives, the founding of his journal marked a shift in approach. He now minimized his invective and attempted to impart black pride by reason and cogent arguments. He announced in his first issue that this would henceforth be the new strategy employed by the UNIA.<sup>9</sup> In his publication of The Black Man a year later, he stated this idea more clearly,

The Negro World, the official organ of the Universal Negro Improvement Association in early days was a propaganda organ. THE BLACK MAN will be a constructive mouthpiece. It is hoped that the education it will convey will materially assist the thoughtful and ambitious members of the race toward a higher racial purpose.<sup>10</sup>

Garvey's emphasis was still upon the liberation of black people from an enslavement to white ideals. As it was, trying to be white proved that blacks had no faith in themselves, or the capabilities of their fellows and through his journal, Garvey set out once again to prove this false, "It is for us, therefore, to continue inspiring the Negro not to hope for his ultimate salvation through the change of his skin, but really through the higher development of his mind."<sup>11</sup>

For a year after commencing publication of The Blackman, Garvey struggled to build the Jamaican Association into a viable base for his activities. As he was later to realize, cut off from the New York chapter where he had once attracted a large following, his exhortations of black pride failed to carry weight, and among Jamaican blacks especially, his appeals fell on deaf ears.

everything is done hypocritically to let him believe everything else but that he is a Negro, and so he has developed a peculiar psychology that seems difficult to explain, because in the West Indies he is more white than he is black, hence his inability to develop truly on racial lines, even though he lives in the midst of golden opportunities<sup>12</sup>.

However, Garvey pushed on in an effort to recapture in Jamaica the glory and triumph of his years in Harlem. In his attempt to do so he often used reverse psychology as a means of admonishing his audience to divest themselves of the notion that black signified inferiority, and that as black people, they were worthless. Among The Blackman's major editorials were sections written by someone entitled simply, "a white man," but the style and tone suggests that they were written by Garvey himself. One editorial in particular, supposedly written from a white point of view, attempted to portray black people as ridiculous in their imitation of whites and was designed to illustrate that as a race, blacks had no creative genius.

In his religion, he is merely a copyist. The very personification of his Godhead and his saviour is based upon that which he absolutely copies and imitates from other races. His Christ is of Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon origin. His God and his conception of the Angelic hosts are all based upon the white ideal. He has nothing original to offer, either for his own inspiration or for demonstrating his own mental independence.<sup>13</sup>

Another article by "a white man" tried to impress upon its readers that their blackness did not constitute a handicap in and of itself, but became a burden when as a race blacks would not collectively strive to achieve a standard of their own and thus transform blackness into an emblem of respectability. As things stood, no one wanted to identify with black people because their colour was a social stigma, equated with their subjugated condition. If blacks could prove their worthiness as a race, blackness could easily become the new ideal to

which other race groups would aspire since it would be associated with pride and achievement,

I would quickly change my race from white to black, if the black man's standard was higher than the white man's because I would have nothing to lose, but as things are today, I could have nothing to gain; but to the contrary I lose much, being identified with the black race in any way.<sup>14</sup>

Carrying his argument further, Garvey filled his journal with poems and messages of race uplift designed to awaken his followers. His message was the same as it had always been: blackness was not a sin, and black people craved to be white because it seemed to them that whites had everything and that blacks who had nothing, could do nothing other than strive to be like whites including imitating their colour. His messages taught that whiteness seemed to be the ultimate because as a race white people were independent and self-supporting, an enviable position towards which black people should aspire. One poem written by Garvey expressed this view as follows,

I'm black not white, which is no crime;  
To have all things makes one so great;  
If blacks did have, all whites would crave  
More black to be for all that time.  
The whites have ALL, in regal state,  
And blacks do think them more sublime  
But whites would think the blacks so brave  
If they had greater wealth all time.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, in every sense, Garvey, through his journal was articulating the same ideas in Jamaica that he had done in New York. In addition, to boost the black man's morale, he argued that the accomplishments of which white people boasted were derived from the achievements of blacks who had once built a great civilization. Therefore, since blacks had once reached the height of perfection, the logic of Garvey's argument was that there was no reason why they could not do so again.

As much as the white man may boast of his glorious deeds to-day the fact remains that what he now knows were [sic] inherited from the original mind of the black man who made Egypt, Carthage and Babylon the centres of civilization, that were not known to the unskilled and savage men of Europe.<sup>16</sup>

But, Garvey needed other outlets for his ideas besides rhetoric. He still sought to foster black pride among the race, by encouraging blacks to run and organize their own commercial ventures. In the United States he had built the Negro Factories Corporation, The Black Star Line, and had created a black religion. He hoped to carry on this work in Jamaica. In the Seventh International Convention of Negro People of the World held in 1934, in Kingston, he outlined the concrete proposals of the movement which remained fundamentally the same as in former years. Once again he hoped to undertake things on a large scale, including the purchase of steamships for purposes of trade. He enlarged his field of vision to include agricultural development in the production and refining of coffee, cocoa, and sugar. The growth of these agricultural products would be in the hands of black people in Jamaica, Trinidad, British Guiana, Grenada, Africa, and other areas in or around the Caribbean. Commercial development such as the manufacture of shoes and household commodities would be placed in the hands of black people living in the United States.<sup>17</sup> The Convention also centered around the question of black education which would encompass a program in keeping with the needs and experiences of the race, along with teaching an appreciation for black art forms which dramatized the race in a positive manner, and encouraging talented black artists (or those who demonstrated promise) by awarding scholarships.<sup>18</sup>

In general, Garvey's program set out to fulfill the work he had begun in the United States but once again, he felt the nature of his base prevented his ideas from being carried to a large enough audience and his program from being implemented. Then too, there were the problems of funding The Blackman which appeared on an irregular basis from 1933-1934. Everything taken into consideration convinced Garvey that he needed a base which was focal to the interests of the world and as Jamaica hardly qualified, he announced in November 1934, that he would leave once again and transfer his headquarters to London which would make it easier for him to conduct his affairs on a global basis.<sup>19</sup>

With the move of Garvey's headquarters to London, The Blackman went out of publication for seven months, reappearing in June 1935, under the new title of The Black Man. The UNIA's program which had been decided upon at the Convention in 1934 was to be implemented with the August issue of The Black Man, signifying once again, a new start in the journey towards the liberation of black people.<sup>20</sup>

Once again, Garvey found his efforts frustrated. He appealed in issue after issue of The Black Man for the necessary funds to put his program into operation but none of the UNIA branches co-operated.

Some have not even paid the annual Assessment Tax paid by its members as the first guarantee of support for the Parent Body, leaving it therefore, in no position to even attempt to carry out the gigantic programme that is more than necessary, particularly at this time, for the salvation of the group.<sup>21</sup>

Despite numerous appeals, Garvey failed to put his program into operation and his concern over a lack of support and interest in the destiny of the race grew more intense as European powers announced

their intentions to expand their spheres of influence. Garvey's move to London had coincided with the invasion of Africa; Adolf Hitler had announced his intention to add parts of the continent to his German empire, while Benito Mussolini invaded Abyssinia in 1935, with the intention of exploiting its resources and people. Against Hitler's proposed invasion, Garvey hotly contended, black people had pride, and did not intend to contaminate their blood by living amongst Germans.

We emphatically protest against any German invasion of our territorial rights, because we do not want to mix with the Germans, who want to keep their blood pure, just as we want to keep ours pure. Herr Hitler thinks that he is the only man who would like to see his race pure in blood. We Negroes of pride long before Hitler discovered the race purity idea, advocated white men keeping their hands of black or native women.<sup>22</sup>

All this led to a renewed interest on the part of Garvey in African nationalism. Imperialism had once again reared its head, the gravest of situations as far as Garvey could see, since the people of Africa were in no position to defend themselves, and those of the black diaspora, in no position to lend assistance. Many other influential figures who were involved in African nationalist movements were also in London at the same time as Garvey and articulating ideas which were very similar to his own. They included C.L.R. James, a well known black writer who had organized a society known as the International African Friends of Ethiopia, George Padmore, also a black writer who became active in James's movement, along with Jomo Kenyatta who eventually became President of Kenya in 1964. One other important pan-African nationalist in the 1930's was Kwame Nkrumah who was eventually to become Prime Minister of Ghana. Nkrumah and Kenyatta



in particular are worthy of additional mention since, although it is likely that all the pan-African nationalists listed above were aware of Garvey and vice-versa, Nkrumah and Kenyatta appear to be the only ones who had direct contact with Garvey's ideas. Though Nkrumah never met Garvey he acknowledged the influence of Garvey's ideas on his thinking while he was a student in the United States during the 1930's and later, when he was Prime Minister of Ghana, launched a fleet of steamships called the Black Star Line in memory of Him. Kenyatta on the other hand met Garvey in London during the 30's although precisely what passed between them is unclear. Nevertheless, he shared Garvey's belief in Africa for the Africans and like all the pan-African nationalists in England during the 1930's, Kenyatta concentrated his efforts on bringing about an end to colonialism in Africa.<sup>23</sup>

Garvey was agitated by the fact that black people need not have found themselves unable to defend themselves from imperialist oppression, and he was particularly vocal on this point until the end of his political career, especially in relation to the situation in Abyssinia. He believed that Haile Selassie, through a lack of pride in himself as a black man, had sold out to whites rather than rely on his own integrity and the integrity of his people. He had Garvey felt, exercised a haughty superiority over the black people of Abyssinia by keeping them in slavery, serfdom and ignorance when he as leader could have done much to pave the way for the emancipation of black people by uplifting the Abyssinians and his nation which would have shone as a star of black pride and dignity.. As Garvey said,

the regime of Haile Selassie had given a bad taste to the mouth, not only of the blacks of Abyssinia but of those of the surrounding territories. They felt that they had a cause against the Amharic white loving emperor who liked to chain and flog black men, and whose brutality to them gave Mussolini the cause to fool the world that he was bestowing a blessing upon the people of Abyssinia by freeing them.<sup>24</sup>

Rather than work along the lines of a cohesive racial policy, encompassing only blacks, Selassie had ignored them and on finding his nation under threat of attack, he had relied on the suggestions of white advisers. He presented his case before the League of Nations believing in the sincerity of white people, only to find himself with no nation at all. Garvey suggested (perhaps inconsistently because he had approached the League earlier for help in putting an end to the exploitation of blacks) that this was to be expected since white and black interests were antagonistic to one another and as a result, it would be foolish to expect whites to chart out a course for the benefit of black people.

The Emperor's reliance on the League was unfortunate, but more so, was his reliance on his white advisers. Would one imagine the cats advising the rats? Would one imagine the lions advising the sheep? . . . Yet Haile Selassie having his hand in the lions mouth allowed the lions to advise him. What else, but be swallowed by the lions as he has been swallowed by the League of Nations.<sup>25</sup>

Such conduct convinced Garvey that Selassie had no respect for anything black. He refused to see himself as a black man and was more concerned with trying, or at least pretending to be white. In fact, Garvey said of Selassie, exactly what he had said of other black leaders in the United States who had surrounded themselves with white advisers; that he was hindering the progress of the race by entrenching further, a contempt for blackness in the minds of black

people.

In the freedom of Abyssinia Haile Selassie should not be allowed to perpetuate the enslaving psychology and the Abyssinians should not allow him to play the fool of wanting to be a white man rather than what he and other Abyssinians are - people of the African race. We are very severe<sup>26</sup> in this. We despise any man who despises the black race.

Garvey used the flight of Selassie to London where he lived for a time in exile after Mussolini's Attack on Abyssinia to lend further credence to his argument. He contended that as far as loyalty to black people was concerned, Selassie's actions revealed him as a fraud who would put the claims of whites before those of his own race. Disembarking from a train at Waterloo Station, Selassie warmly welcomed the reception of a delegation of white officials, completely ignoring the Negro Federation which had also arrived to meet him at his alighting point.<sup>27</sup> It was such bad diplomacy coupled with absolute faith in the honesty and ability of white people which Garvey felt had lost Selassie his nation. Selassie needed to learn a lesson which was that black people should only place their destiny in the hands of blacks if they were to have any chance of surviving and creating for themselves a black kingdom. As Garvey explained,

if the Emperor had paid more attention to modern diplomacy and scientific politics, rather than flattering himself over the idea of his being descended from Solomon, making him superior to the other Abyssinians, because they are black, he would have been still Emperor and we would have been proud of him as our representative.<sup>28</sup>

But Selassie had lost his nation and blacks on other continents were economically and politically impotent, and therefore in no position to offer assistance. Garvey lamented this situation since he realized what could have been if black leaders and citizens at

an earlier stage, had put aside their differences and wielded themselves together as a conscious and co-operative unit under the banner of black pride, for their common protection and preservation as a race. Black people would at least have been in a position to exert some concrete influence.

It is true that in passion the whole Negro World is stirred, but what can we achieve through mere passion. The things that should go with our passions have been neglected; they were considered at the time when we advocated the husbanding and practice of them to be unnecessary and utopian in the reach. Such was the criticism of men like Du Bois. To them there was no need for the Negro to reach out after anything else but the changing of his colour or complexion.<sup>29</sup>

The result was that blacks were unprepared to meet their white oppressors since they were far from being united as a race. Garvey suggested that all white powers were engaged in a world-wide conspiracy to crush the black man, despite the pretensions of some to neutrality. Further to this he added, all European powers and white Americans were eager to see Italy win out over Abyssinia because it would be a blow to their pride as a mighty white race to be defeated by blacks who they always said were inferior.

Italian finance in America and Italian political power have combined to influence American businessmen to break through the neutrality to assist Italy, whilst Abyssinia goes floundering because the Negroes in America cannot bring the similar pressure to prevent the Italians getting advantage.<sup>30</sup>

He went on to say, "Right in Africa there are white people praying for Italy to win so as not to give the Negroes of Africa the opportunity of thinking that they can give the white man under any circumstances a thrashing."<sup>31</sup>

Garvey continually stressed the point that a lack of vision in previous years among black people was responsible for the dire straits

in which they found themselves. With respect to Haile Selassie, he pointed out that as early as 1920, the year which marked the first UNIA convention, he had sent invitations to the leaders of black states and organizations, urging them to become involved in the spirit of the movement which would lead the way to eventual black liberation.

All of them he claimed, either sent representatives, or at least replied, with the exception of Selassie who, according to Garvey, thought himself more white than black and therefore better able to identify with a program designed by whites rather than one conceived and put into operation by blacks.

We can remember in 1920 inviting the Government of Abyssinia to send representatives to the International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World in common with other Negro Governments, institutions and organizations. Whilst others replied and most of them sent representatives to that greatest of all Negro Conventions, the Abyssinian Government returned the communication unopened. Its policy then, as during the Italo-Abyssinian war, was no doubt to rely completely on the advice and friendship of white people.<sup>32</sup>

Garvey's vision had always been pan-African in focus but in response to the crisis in Africa, he became more emphatic on this point urging blacks to join together as a race for their protection and think in terms of their blackness. Experience had proven that thinking otherwise was futile.

Wherever the black man is to-day our advice to him is to think black. In thinking black it doesn't mean that we must ignore the essentials of life, but as far as our political freedom is concerned and our economic solution to think black is the safest way out of a dilemma that has been forced upon us by the trend of world events.<sup>33</sup>

He urged black people on every continent to take pride in their colour which signified a great heritage and past glory. For this reason he argued, black people should feel proud, and walk tall rather

than with a downcast eye. The difficulty for Garvey however as it had always been, was bringing about their realization of it. Again, Garvey was reiterating a variation on ideas of black pride that he had articulated in the 1920's, but he felt that the events of the 1930's, required more than ever, immediate action. His problem though, remained that of forcing blacks into a vision of themselves as a noble race which could only be brought about by teaching them pride in their colour. Once he had overcome this obstacle, Garvey firmly believed that with confidence in themselves and respect for their identity as black people, however light or dark their complexion or whatever their country of residence, they would be knit-together as a unified group, never again finding themselves unprepared to meet the threat of full onslaught from whites.

Black men in Africa, the West Indies, South and Central America and the United States should close ranks and concentrate upon the dignity of the race. It should be a sacred crusade for each and every one to see that no further advantage is taken in exploiting the black man for the convenience of those who have no respect for his skin. His skin is as clean, as healthy and as pure as that of the skin of any other man. It is the skin of a noble heritage. Why should the black man hang down his head because of his colour when in fact his fathers in Africa made it possible for other civilizations to be undertaken by other races.<sup>34</sup>

To this end, Garvey used his journal to move blacks into concerted action. The black man was losing ground in Africa and the European powers appeared to be closing in asserting their claim over African countries. Garvey saw this as an effort to exploit the resources and the native peoples to further enhance the prestige and greatness of white nations in the eyes of the world, "Africa and the black world to the white man is but an opportunity for his greatness and so

journeying as we do, through the great systems of political manoeuvre, we can only advise the black man to think black."<sup>35</sup> Throughout the 1930's, Garvey counselled blacks to think positively. At the same time, he recognized he was battling against the same old difficulties in that black people, especially those living in predominantly white societies, tended to accept the disparaged vision of themselves forced upon them by white civilization. Garvey attempted to illustrate this in one of his many dialogues carried by The Black Man in which a young boy becoming aware of the differences in economic condition between blacks and whites asks his father if this is due to the inherent inferiority of black people. The father first of all replies, "My son, to be born black is no disgrace nor misfortune. It is an honour. Nature never intended humanity to be of one colour or complexion; and so there are different races or types of people in the world."<sup>36</sup> The rest of the dialogue went on to explain,

under our present civilization the Negro was forced to accept his educational code from other peoples who were not disposed to give him credit for anything. They wrote books quite disparaging to the Negro. Their literature was intended to bolster up their particular race and civilization and down that of the black man. Historians who have written have all twisted the history of the world so as to show the inferiority of the blacks. . . . he has been learning out of the white man's book, thereby developing the white man's psychology.<sup>37</sup>

This enslaving white psychology was the main reason why Garvey believed it almost impossible to unite blacks of the diaspora where white concepts had permeated their consciousness. This was especially the case in Jamaica where the caste system had frustrated all his attempts to build the UNIA into a viable race organization.

the West Indian Negroes of enlightenment call themselves "coloured people," as to suggest that to

be coloured-the result of the mixing of black and white blood-constitutes a superiority above black, and so there is absolutely no cohesion racially between the black and coloured people of the West Indies. This tends to weaken them in that there is . . . prejudice between the black and coloured people of the West Indies.<sup>38</sup>

To illustrate his point further, Garvey employed a number of witty devices bringing to his readers comic relief while at the same time, reminding blacks of the absurdity of worshipping a light skin. Under the heading of "smiles for the thoughtful," one issue of The Black Man carried a conversation between a "coloured" girl and a black lover in which the girl claimed that her lover had no appreciation for her lightness of colour. This was an insult she claimed which was made even more severe by the fact that a black friend of hers received much better treatment by her own boyfriend, even though she was black.

Black Lover: What do you mean by sense of appreciation?

Coloured Girl: Well, if I must tell you, it is this, you do not seem to appreciate my colour.

Black Lover: Appreciate your colour?

Coloured Girl: Yes, you seem to think less of me than Mr Brown thinks of Jamie, who is black.

Black Lover: How do you come to that conclusion?

Coloured Girl: Because you have made no effort to reach up to me in appreciation of my colour.

Black Lover: I see. Well, since I can't reach up I shall reach down. Please give me my hat. Goodbye pretty.<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, Garvey urged that trends of the 1920's had proven him correct in saying that whenever black race organizations were tainted with white influence, blacks could expect to gain nothing. In 1935, when American blacks were suffering more than any other group from the effects of the depression, Garvey found Du Bois protesting in an article in Current History, "No more critical situation ever faced the Negroes of America than that of to-day not in 1830 nor in



1867. More than ever the appeal of the Negro for elementary justice falls on deaf ears."<sup>40</sup> Once again, Garvey joined in battle with Du Bois and his attack grew even more scathing. Garvey blamed Du Bois, for the breakdown of the UNIA which he believed would have blossomed into a viable organization, and which by the 1930's, would have liberated black people from white capital thus rendering them immune to the problems faced by the west. Not only that but Garvey, unlike Du Bois, believed that the assault upon Africa by European powers which occurred alongside the depression, could have been met with equal force by blacks of all continents forming a united front. This is not to suggest that Du Bois had no interest in Africa. Throughout his life he was an important pan-Africanist. His ideas however were of a different nature to Garvey's and although recognizing the importance of political concerns, his interest in Africa was primarily cultural. Garvey stressed the importance of African culture but was more concerned with uniting blacks on the African continent with those in other countries.

The scattered Negroes of themselves in all parts of the world had no imperial or racial co-operative spirit. Nothing was ever undertaken except the effort of the Universal Negro Improvement Association to organize the Negro as a solid phalanx to meet any attack from without. When I endeavoured to place on the ocean steamships with the idea of building up a great Merchant Marine, the ignorant of the race laughed at me, as well as the intellectuals. When I undertook the responsibility of projecting big commercial Corporations the same Negroes used the force of Government to smash me.<sup>41</sup>

For such a lack of racial vision, Garvey remained convinced throughout his life that Du Bois was totally imbued with the concept of whiteness, and deceiving the black people whom he claimed to represent.

As a fact, Du Bois doesn't see black he sees white, but so as to be able to maintain his white ideals without losing

his association with Negroes, he skilfully pretends Negro leadership. Du Bois is an advocate of miscegenation, he believes in the mixing of black and white. In fact, that is his solution of the Negro problem. He has always desired the race to commit suicide by jumping over the white fence.<sup>42</sup>

In fact, as late as 1937, the NAACP of which Du Bois was still a member was still proving, in Garvey's eyes, its contempt for a black skin when it offered to fight a case on behalf of Joshua Cockburn, formerly a Captain of the Black Star Line. Cockburn had purchased a house in a New York residential suburb only to find that his neighbours had filed a court injunction against him on the grounds that Cockburn and his wife were unwelcome in an exclusively white area. According to Garvey and A.M. Wendell Malliet, a contributor to The Black Man, Cockburn contested the case on the grounds that although his skin was black and his wife's coloured, they were not Negroes.<sup>43</sup> Apparently, the NAACP offered to put any financial resources at their disposal behind the case, to which Garvey exclaimed,

It is rather surprising that an Organization created for the purpose of dignifying the race should attempt to in this case discredit the race. How they can find it justifiable to collect money as they generally do in these cases from Negroes to prove that a Negro is not a Negro is surprising.<sup>44</sup>

Garvey viewed Cockburn himself with amusement and contempt. As one time Captain of the Black Star Line and member of the UNIA, Cockburn had professed to be a proud black man belonging to an all-black organization dedicated to race uplift. Now Garvey argued, he no longer saw himself as black, and the NAACP was using the funds of black people to help a black man prove that he was in fact white.

Captain Cockburn is now rich and is having his troubles in his effort to lose himself among the white people of New York. It is surprising that he is no longer a Negro. We never knew a person could change his race, and skin so

easily, but the peculiar anomaly is that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is to collect money from Negroes to prove that a Negro is not a Negro.<sup>45</sup>

It had always been central to Garvey's belief that blacks should stand up for themselves as proud black people, rather than try to overcome their problems by changing their race or complexion which was really no solution at all. His argument was that black people shared everything in common with other races as far as feelings and capabilities were concerned and as such, rather than waste their potential in trying to ape and become the second best of the white man, they should use their energies in becoming the best of black people.

I cannot see why a black man should be ashamed of being a Negro. Isn't he made the same? Hasn't he the same feelings and passions and desires like other people? Then why characteristically feel inferior [?] There is no inferiority but that which you have brought upon yourself. The dignity of man is universal, be he white or black, therefore every man should stand on his own and look the world in its face with pride in himself.<sup>46</sup>

Throughout his career as an advocate of black pride and nationalism, Garvey had listened to black people protesting to the white man about a lack of opportunities. In the 1920's, they had complained about discrimination in the employment sector and housing. They had protested against disfranchisement and segregation and in the 1930's, when competition between whites and blacks for the few available jobs was really fierce, Garvey found them still protesting. When 1935, found Benito Mussolini in Africa still, the only measure of influence blacks could bring to bear was protest, hardly an effective weapon against the force of modern military technology. Surely, Garvey admonished the black world, history and current events

had proven conclusively that blacks and whites could not live peaceably together while competing for the few scarce resources, and surely experience had proven that black people could not look to whites for guidance or the protection of their interests.

He is complaining of lack of opportunities everywhere he comes under the control of the other fellow. What else could you expect? Will the Romans build for the Carthagians, will the Greeks build Greece for the Persians, will the Germans build Germany for the French? The answer is no. Then why should the black man expect the white man to build for the black man.<sup>47</sup>

To counter the wave of imperialism which had risen with more force in Garvey's London years, making the international problems of black people more keenly felt, Garvey urged blacks to unleash the tidal wave of black pride and nationalism by seeing their struggle in terms of their blackness.

For the black man to assume his responsibility he must see black. Racially it is a waste of time for any group to see otherwise. The black man has a function to perform similar to that in any other man, but the difficulty is his realization of it.<sup>48</sup>

Garvey's rejection of organizations dominated by or including whites extended to even radical or socialist movements designed to help the oppressed. He constantly argued that blacks should subscribe to a program for and by themselves. Although certain classes of whites suffered problems similar to black people, Garvey, from seeing the way the black man had been treated historically by whites, a situation which had once again reached a point of crisis in the 1930's, felt that whatever the political complexion of white people, their claims to sincerity could never be taken at face value. Garvey believed that communist and socialist movements were not interested in black people in the same way that they were interested in members of their

own race, but merely sought to rally the black man's support to gain as much numerical strength as possible for their cause as a disadvantaged white group.

but when it comes to the involvement of the Negro it is high time for us to repeat ourselves in explaining our position.

Primarily, there is no difference between capitalistic white men and communistic white men in the determination of racial interest. It is true that the communistic whites pretend a kind of sympathy for and fellowship with the Negro, but that is only a means to an end.<sup>49</sup>

In other words, Garvey was convinced that black people would be unwise to replace capitalistic whites with communistic whites because although the politics of the two groups differed, racially there was no difference between them as a race. Communists he believed, subscribed to a version of black inferiority in much the same way as white capitalists did.<sup>50</sup> In any case, Garvey argued that as white people, it was logical they they would be concerned with advancing the interests of their race first.

At the same time, Garvey realized that extreme left wing organizations were attempting to attract black people by holding Russia up as an example of what an overthrow of a capitalistic state could do for blacks. But he argued, Russian policy was a skilful ploy and communists were artful deceivers. As far as the interests of black people were concerned, Russia had proved nothing.

Russia treats the few Negroes there to-day with consideration only because there is no danger from black domination. This present day treatment of Negroes in Russia is heralded as one of the blessings of Communism, but sensible Negroes should not be misguided by that, because there is no Negro problem in Russia, but it is felt that if twenty million were to be transported to that country lynchings and burnings would not be strange incidents in the life of Soviet Russia.<sup>51</sup>

This was a belief Garvey shared with the pan-African nationalists

who were in London during the same period. Jomo Kenyatta for example, was adamant that African nationalism should not be used as a device for attaining Russian political ends, while George Padmore who had for a time been involved in communist politics, became skeptical of its ends, believing that the cause of black liberation could easily become subordinate to white opportunism in left-wing movements where blacks and whites co-operated.<sup>52</sup> In saying this though, Garvey should not be misunderstood. He never said that black people should not be radical, what he consistently argued was that black people should be radical in a program of their own.<sup>53</sup>

Despite Garvey's eloquent appeals to black pride and the need for concerted action, his London years were the ones during which he struggled unsuccessfully to hold on to a semblance of his once great organization. These were the years in which UNIA funds and supporters dwindled to almost nothing, along with his effectiveness as a race leader. In every sense though, despite Garvey's lack of support, he was still affirmative in his ideas and because of this, they must be viewed as a continuation of his earlier philosophy. The most significant of the principles which guided Garvey's career was black pride and if not examined from this vantage point it is easy to misunderstand the man, seeing him as undertaking a multitude of tasks such as forming a political party in Jamaica, to addressing audiences and publishing articles with no central purpose linking these activities.

The continuity of his ideas becomes especially evident when The Blackman and The Black Man are seen as fulfilling a much needed journalistic role in promoting black pride in much the same way as the Negro World had done. Everything Garvey wrote in these journals bore

a direct relation to the struggle for black liberation which was to be achieved through winning first the minds and souls of black people. Moreover, Garvey's participation in Jamaican democratic politics shortly after his return should be seen not as a departure from his principles, but as consistent with them. Garvey in this instance proved himself willing to experiment with any device which would bring the question of black oppression to the fore, and elicit a positive response from black people.

## Footnotes for Chapter Three

1. "Declaration of Rights of The Negro Peoples of the World," Philosophy and Opinions, V.2 p. 137-138.

2. Randall K. Burkett, Black Redemption, p. 24.

3. Amy Jacques Garvey, Garvey and Garveyism, p. 207.

4. Ibid, pp. 205-207.

5. Ibid, p. 212.

6. Ibid, p. 213.

7. Marcus Garvey, "The West Indian Negro," The Blackman, May-June 1934, p. 17

8. See The Blackman and The Black Man for the number of issues published.

9. Marcus Garvey, "The Blackman Makes its Bow," The Blackman, December 1933, pp. 1-2.

10. \_\_\_\_\_, "Our New Start," The Blackman, June 1935, p. 1.

11. \_\_\_\_\_, "The Negro Race," The Blackman, May-June 1934, p. 15.

12. \_\_\_\_\_, "The West Indian Negro," The Blackman, May-June 1934, p. 17.

13. A Whiteman, "Why I Hate The Negro," The Blackman, December 1933, pp. 15-16.

14. A Whiteman, "If I Were A Negro?" The Blackman, January 1934, p. 7.

15. Marcus Garvey, "Black and White," The Blackman, June 1934, p. 1.

16. \_\_\_\_\_, "The Negro Race," The Blackman, May-June 1934, p. 16.

17. \_\_\_\_\_, "Speech from the Seventh International Convention of Negro People of the World," The Blackman, November 1934, pp. 19-20.

18. Ibid, pp. 21, 25.



19. Marcus Garvey, "The Removal," The Blackman, November 1934, p. 2.
20. \_\_\_\_\_, "Our Convention Program," The Black Man, July 1935, pp. 2-3.
21. \_\_\_\_\_, "The Negro Does Not Prepare: That Is Why He Loses Every Time," The Black Man, May-June 1936, p. 10.
22. \_\_\_\_\_, "Keep Hands Off," The Black Man, September-October 1936, pp. 1-2.
23. J.H. Clarke Ed., Marcus Garvey and The Vision of Africa, pp. 326-327, 373, 384, 402, 420.
24. Marcus Garvey, "The Failure of Haile Selassie as Emperor," The Black Man, March-April 1937, pp. 8-9.
25. \_\_\_\_\_, "Italy's Conquest?" The Black Man, July-August 1936, p. 6.
26. \_\_\_\_\_, "Haile Selassie and Benito Mussolini," The Black Man, March-April 1934, pp. 1-2.
27. \_\_\_\_\_, "Italy's Conquest?" p. 6.
28. \_\_\_\_\_, "Criticizing The Editor For Criticizing Haile Selassie," The Black Man, September-October 1936, p. 16.
29. \_\_\_\_\_, "Our Lesson - Remember It," The Black Man, August-September 1935, p. 11.
30. \_\_\_\_\_, "The American Mind and The War," The Black Man, December 1935, p. 1.
31. \_\_\_\_\_, "The War Continues," The Black Man, March 1936, p. 1.
32. \_\_\_\_\_, "Italy's Conquest?" p. 4.
33. \_\_\_\_\_, "Seeing Black," The Black Man, March 1938, p. 2.
34. \_\_\_\_\_, "Fooing The Negro," The Black Man, August 1937, p. 6.
35. \_\_\_\_\_, "Seeing Black," p. 3.
36. \_\_\_\_\_, "A Dialogue: What's The Difference," The Black Man, June 1935, p. 10.
37. Ibid, p. 11.

38. Marcus Garvey, "A Dialogue: What's The Difference," The Black Man, August-September 1935, p. 14.
39. The Imp, "Smiles for the Thoughtful," The Black Man, August-September 1935, p. 19.
40. Marcus Garvey, "A Barefaced Coloured Leader!" The Black Man, July 1935, p. 6.
41. \_\_\_\_\_, "Unpreparedness A Crime: The Negro Is Guilty." The Black Man, March 1936, pp. 7-8.
42. \_\_\_\_\_, "A Barefaced Coloured Leader!" p. 8.
43. A.M. Wendell Mallier, "Cockburns Want To Prove They Are Not Negroes!" The Black Man, August 1937, p. 19.
44. Marcus Garvey, "How Foolish," The Black Man, August 1937, p. 1.
45. Ibid.
46. Marcus Garvey, "Fellow Men of the Negro Race Greetings!" The Black Man, August 1936, p. 11.
47. \_\_\_\_\_, "Plain Talking To The Negro," The Black Man, March-April 1937, p. 11.
48. \_\_\_\_\_, "Seeing Black," p. 2.
49. \_\_\_\_\_, "Communism And The Negro," The Black Man, May-June 1936, p. 2.
50. Ibid, pp. 2-3; Marcus Garvey, "The So-Called Workers," The Black Man, September-October 1936, p. 3.
51. \_\_\_\_\_, "Communism And The Negro," p. 2.
52. J.H. Clarke Ed., p. 437; Amy Jacques Garvey, Garvey and Garveyism, p. 319.
53. Marcus Garvey, "The Future," The Black Man, July-August 1936, p. 9.

## CONCLUSION

Garvey's life-long contention was that racism against black people was not simply part of a wider class struggle, but a struggle which had grown out of a historical black experience. Garvey believed that this unique experience had made blacks a separate group with distinct problems. In the 1920's with conditions the way they were in the West Indies, South and Central America and the United States, and in the 1930's with Mussolini's attack on Abyssinia, and the rise of Germany's Hitler, this position was borne out. Garvey's quest for self-determination for blacks arose out of their particular oppression and their unique global experience. If Garvey believed, as he sincerely did, that historical and current trends had proven beyond doubt that whites and blacks could not co-exist, then his interpretation of the situation could only demand black autonomy in every phase of life. This was a struggle which black people must win for themselves since they could not expect whites to support the cause of a black nation. In pursuit of this, Garvey realized blacks had to be free to work and speak for themselves, otherwise the result would be the white man telling black people what they should need or want. He believed so much in the abilities of black people, if sufficiently awakened, that he opposed all whites, communist as well as capitalist, even though the former claimed to be waging a struggle for humanity at large. To understand Garvey's rejection of black and white co-operation, it must be understood that his analysis and interpretation was a response to a racial experience. As he saw it, humanity at large was not the victim of oppression but black people,

and only a black organization he believed could understand the peculiar psychology of black people and the meaning of black redemption.

As a man of expansive vision, Garvey's declining years as a race leader found him experimenting with new ways to deal with the sources of black degradation. A black ideology had through the force of circumstance, become his only tool. Although Garvey was a man of action as well as words, he was forced, through the virtual collapse of his movement to resort more and more to the articulation of ideas rather than a combination of words and action. For the collapse of the UNIA, he was always ready to blame the NAACP and other black integrationists, and perhaps in part, this may explain it. However, an alternative assessment could argue that Garvey tried to do too much at once. In every way, his conviction in his ideas was so great that he believed the mere force of his ideas, if translated into action, would carry his movement through. For example, if one asks upon what basis did Garvey arrive at the conclusion that his ideas alone were the right ones, especially on economic nationalism which went hand in glove with his black pride philosophy, the reply is that Garvey always stated that a black economic base was both necessary and possible, and could be won through black pride. Nowhere in his writings and speeches however, did he provide a systematic interpretation of economic forces to give credibility to his judgement. He relied too much on what his personal experiences and observations as a black man had told him, and while this was clearly advantageous in interpreting the feelings of the black masses, his black pride focus as a means to black power in many ways constricted his vision. He

underestimated power outside the black community, by-passing the question of white influence and power as irrelevant to his struggle. He believed that black people as a unified group could oppose any threat with equal force and sheer numbers. Furthermore, as much as Garvey might have refused to admit it, while arguing liberation from white ideals and being positive in this, he arrived at his ideas on black liberation within the context of colonialism and American white capitalism and he never departed from this structure. His economic enterprises were closely modelled after the latter. Having said this though, this does not support the conviction that Garvey was not radical, his call for a nation was in itself a militant act, and although he accepted the legitimacy of the capitalist system, he was adamant that black people would welcome black oppressors no more than white ones. In his drive for a black capitalist economy, his analysis was short-sighted. He never fully realized that in order for it to become viable, it would have to compete with white capitalism, a firmly entrenched and powerful force.

Whatever the weaknesses in Garvey's approach or in his analysis of the power struggle, as a race leader he offered a constructive philosophy, a well-ordered framework centered around the ideal of black pride. As a leader, he successfully interpreted the feelings of the black masses, and defined numerous versions of black nationalism that have since become popular in the 1960's and 1970's. With his emphasis upon the importance of blackness as a concept, Garvey's singular and lasting contribution lies in the fact that he gave to black people, for the first time, a philosophy which encouraged a new self-confidence and a sense of feeling that they

were sombodies. He might not have achieved his African nation, but he made giant strides in his effort to destroy the inferiority complexes of black people, to make them conscious as a race, and pave the way for future black liberation groups.

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